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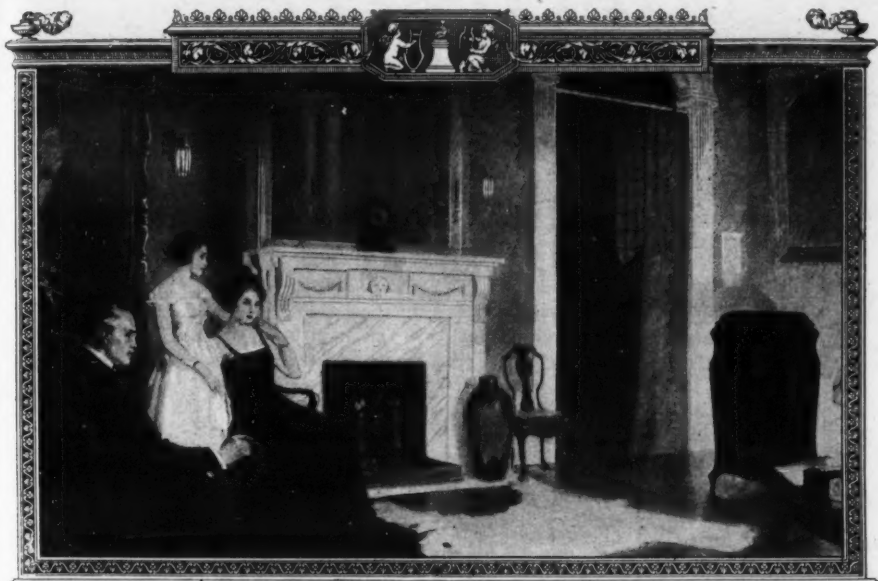
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Vol. XXIX

No. 1

# SMITH'S MAGAZINE

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Monthly publication issued by SMITH PUBLISHING HOUSE, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.  
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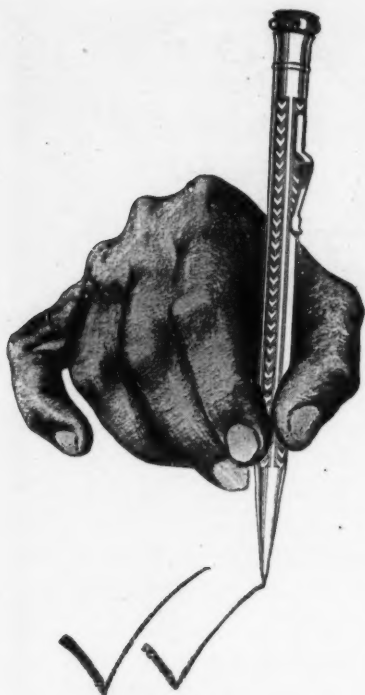


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# SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 29

APRIL, 1919

Number 1

## Dreamers of Dreams

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "The Wife of Asa Pincheon," "The Lady of Rocca Pirenza," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

A whirlwind courtship—a hurried wedding—the bride in love with another man—and that man married to another woman—How did Fate untangle the threads? An absorbing story told with the sympathy and insight that distinguishes everything Anne O'Hagan writes.

### CHAPTER I.

AND I require and charge you both, as you shall answer at the dreadful day of judgment—"

The Gail who—as detached from the Gail standing before the altar as the disembodied spirit of one newly dead from the coffined figure on which tears and flowers fall—listened to the admonitions and responses, watched the ceremony. Hers was the futile horror of a woman in a nightmare. She could not speak, could not protest. Her voice was holden, her limbs were bound. The outcry she longed to make, the flight she would fain have attempted, were impossible. The corporeal agents of her will were hers no longer, it appeared. But surely *he*, he would speak! Surely he, the boy with the nice mouth and the glad, brilliant eyes, would know now that the joke, the flirtation, the mad escapade, had gone far enough!

But no. He was looking at the other Gail, the Gail who stood white, rigid, beautiful, an automaton, before the altar. He was looking at her with the same expression he had worn all the

evening—of joyful, tender possession, of pride.

Good heavens, did not the wild, dreaming lad see that the woman upon whom he was bending that look was only the simulacrum of a woman, that the real Gail was not there, but here, here, in the dusky spaces of the church where the altar lights did not shine, where the swiftly gathered bridal flowers from Bettina Horton's spring garden did not scent the air? Did he not understand that all that made Gail, save only that fair, colorful shell of flesh upon which his eyes were fastened, was out here, trying vainly to protest against the sacrilege?

"Who giveth this woman to this man?"

There would be no response to that question. The disembodiment of Gail, watching, listening, remembering, thought shudderingly of Bettina's suggestion as they had all piled into the motors in front of the Lilacs, bound for the church.

"Everything is provided for," she had cried, in her throaty, affected, pretty

voice. "Everything—except some one to give Gail away. You ought to do that, Jaspar."

But her husband had not faltered or winced. He had answered, in his inevitable manner of smooth weariness:

"Ah, but of course I never would give her away! If I were her father or stood *in loco parentis*, I should, as you are aware, send Captain Blair about his business, and shut her up in my study behind lock and key."

"Oh, Gail, are you going to promise to obey him?" Stella Howe had gurgled, interrupting Jaspar, interrupting the clash of glances between him and his wife with her keen eyes and her smile of mockery.

No, there was no one to give her away. And Doctor Hunt placed her hand in Jerry Blair's and the ceremony went on.

"I, Sarah Abigail, take thee, Jeremiah Woodruff—" Doctor Hunt was prompting.

Surely, surely, she could act now! Surely she could make her point at last! All that would be required was to close her lips firmly upon the words, to refuse to say them after the absurd man in the white wrapper, to shake her head, to withdraw her fingers from the firm clasp of that nice boy's hand! The watching Gail knew how warm and firm and friendly that handclasp was. But no! The Gail at the altar was repeating the formula.

She had made all the responses, she had felt the slipping of a gold band upon her finger, she had knelt and had heard more words, stately, solemn, beautiful, chanted above her bowed head. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, had come the change. The priest in the white robe had become gray-bearded Doctor Hunt shaking her by the hand, wishing her happiness, congratulating the nice boy. Arm in arm, they had turned to face the wedding party in the two or three front pews, and then

the nice boy, with eyes proud, merry, tender, had looked at her for a second, and had leaned toward her and kissed her on the cheek.

It was such a different kiss from the one in the Hortons' garden last night, the kiss that had been the prelude to this marriage. This was the kiss of—any one, Gail the disembodied told herself—of a brother, an uncle, a friend. That other kiss had been—in the second she had yielded to it, had returned it—the burning kiss of a lover, of a captor, almost.

They stepped down from the chancel step on which they had knelt. They faced the little group. The disembodied Gail who had so uselessly felt protest, horror, rebellion, there in the dim spaces of the church, rushed back to her earthly tabernacle. She took possession once more of the body that had been Sarah Abigail Center, and that was now Sarah Abigail Blair.

The nightmare that had bound her while the marriage had proceeded passed. It differed in but one respect from any other nightmare. The dreadful thing that it had envisaged was real. It had not been a dream. She was married—married to this strange man.

They were crowding about her. Stella Howe was weeping because, she said, it had been so romantic, the most romantic thing she had ever known. Think of it! A week ago neither had known that the other existed, and now—

"Wrong, Miss Howe!" the boy interrupted her. His hand was steady upon Gail's arm, his voice sure and triumphant. "I knew that Gail existed—I always knew it. My only problem, you see, was to find her."

Bettina Horton, bizarre and piquant in her motor-corps uniform, struck in:

"It's all awfully pretty, Captain Blair, and you'll never deny, I'm sure—for you have a grateful and sincere look!—that I was your chief aid and abetter in





The priest in the white robe had become gray-bearded Doctor Hunt shaking her by the hand, wishing her happiness.

Robert Gray

this quest of yours. Render me thanks, both of you! Who introduced you, who threw you at each other's heads? Who realized, even sooner than yourselves, that you were foreordained for each other? Who brushed aside all the practical obstacles? Why, the very chiffon flummery in Gail's satchel, and the satchel itself, for that matter—Ah, Gail was the lucky girl that I was just back from Paris, even war-time Paris! Render me thanks, both of you! For I shall need them! What do you think Jaspar is going to do to me when he has me alone? What is he going to say to me for engineering a romance for his ideal secretary?"

"It's all too true, Blair," said Jaspar Horton lightly. "You're playing havoc with historical literature when you take Miss Center away from me. Not that historical literature will matter much one way or the other when you fellows get through over there. However"—he shrugged his shoulders with their little sag of disillusionment—"this doesn't fit a wedding. Mrs. Blair, may I wish you all the happiness in the world?"

Gail felt Bettina's half-malicious eyes upon her, and the inquisitive glance of all the rest of them. She summoned a little smile to her lips and she placed her hand in his. Every one, she thought, must read the cry her eyes sent to him: "Oh, why did you let me do this? Why did you let me?" But his eyes, cold and cruel with the cruelty of a wounded soul, sent no message back but weariness and contempt.

"It's too dreadful that there isn't to be even one little piece of bride cake or one little glass of champagne!" lamented some one.

"But there is to be, for all of us except the lovers," cried Bettina. Gail shivered at the word. "You're all coming back to our house—the rest of you. And what are bride cake and champagne to them? It's May, and moonlight, and there's a shining road ahead

of them—I mean, of course, to New York. Please don't any one think I am being figurative about married bliss. Jaspar and I know better, don't we, dearest?"

"Don't let my cynical wife expose the sawdust filling of your doll in this way, Blair," said Jaspar.

He put an affectionate-seeming hand upon his wife's shoulder, patted her smooth, olive cheek. Gail felt the inward wince she had felt ever since Bettina Horton had come home from France. She turned toward her husband to shut out the sight of the caress.

"We shan't make New York to-night unless we start," she suggested, and they all moved forward to the door.

Beyond the lawn up which the fashionable folk of the college town tripped every Sunday morning were the four cars which had borne the sudden wedding party from the Hortons' dinner table to the altar. One was Blair's. He led his wife to it, and they stood, for a moment, in the bright moonlight.

"When you and I both go back to France, Captain Blair, you'll let Gail come to Jaspar's rescue, won't you? Medieval Italy will help her forget—and it will help Jaspar, too."

"Gail will do what she pleases while I am gone," he answered. Gail liked his voice, felt a sudden sense of strength and tranquility in him. Bettina's hidden mockeries, which had been stinging her so for weeks, lost their power for a second. This man by her side, this husband of hers—why, one could make a friend of him, almost!

He stepped into the car, and she took her place beside him.

"A hundred and five miles of good road," said Doctor Hunt. "You couldn't ask for better. Good-by, Mrs. Blair—or, rather, au revoir. You, too, captain. Good luck, good luck!"

"No punctures, Blair! Good-by to you both."

That was Jaspar. Gail closed her eyes.

Something in his voice, harsh and abrupt, so pierced her heart that, for a second, she felt faint.

Blair touched the levers, threw in the clutch. The car started smoothly forward. There was a chorus of "good lucks" from the group in front of the church. Stella Howe hurled an inept handful of rice and a grain struck Gail in the eye. The final five minutes of her existence in Clearfield College close were spent in struggling to remove it.

By the time she had succeeded, the square stone towers, the ivy-covered walls of the college on the hillside had been lost. Life as she had known it for four full and poignant years was over. She was committed to this new adventure. Her heart stood still at the entrance to the path she had chosen. No, it had not been choice. She recalled the utter detachment of her mind and soul from her body, back there at the altar where she had plighted her troth to this stranger. There had been no faintest element of choice in that! Coercion had been laid upon her, by what or by whom she could not tell. But she had not been a free agent in the whole affair. Fate had played with her.

## CHAPTER II.

Jerry drove without seeming effort. He did not turn his eyes away from the road upon which his searchlight shone



"Isn't it the most wonderful night in the world, sweetheart?" he asked her.

faintly in the moonlight, and she stole a long look at his face.

He was a good-looking boy, this young captain whom she had married as in a trance. She knew how brown his skin was; the ridiculous six days' acquaintance had been long enough to impress that color upon her mental retina—something darker than ivory, fairer than russet. Bettina had called it biscuit-colored. It exactly matched his thick-growing, straight hair. But his eyes were brilliantly, vividly blue. There was a look always of gay expectancy in them. And in the same gay expectancy of his smile, she had overlooked the cameo-cut firmness of his mouth and jaw. Watching him now, as he drove steadily on through the night,

she realized that firmness for the first time.

Ten or fifteen miles out of Clearfield, on the top of a high hill, he brought the car to a standstill. The world dipped away from them, all silver and sapphire, all beautiful cups of valleys, all tender curves of uprising hills. The spring woods that dotted the landscape here and there were too young in their leafage to be more than feathery blurs upon the night, but their delicacy was pricked and pointed by the black of evergreens. The air was full of a myriad of sweet odors—odors of earth released from icy bondages, odors of bark beneath which new sap was running, odors of daring, upspringing bud and blossom. From some pond, deep in the woods below them, there was a silvery chime of frogs.

"Isn't it the most wonderful night in the world, sweetheart?" he asked her.

He took off his cap and threw it upon the floor of the tonneau behind them, among the satchels. He looked more than ever boyish with that indication of authority removed from him.

"Yes, it is wonderful," Gail answered. Her voice sounded dry, almost metallic.

"I wonder if you'll think that you've married a madman?" he speculated, watching her with smiling eyes and lips. "I have to risk it. Sooner or later, you'll be acquainted with all my vagaries. Why not sooner?"

If only she could bring herself to stop him, Gail thought! If only she could take advantage of this opening to explain to him that there had been a mistake—an absurd mistake, a criminal mistake! But though she moistened her lips, she could not begin. There was something in the joyousness of his look, something in the whole beauty of the night, that stayed her speech. In some spot less dedicated to loveliness she must tell him the ugly thing that had to be told. At some minute when his face

was not so gloriously the face of a young knight-errant, she must meet it and say the words that would quench its light.

"Do you know whom you are like?" he asked her, apparently forgetting what he had been about to say.

"You've told me that I'm like so many lovely ladies," she answered with a smile half sad, half satiric. "Is there another?"

"Have I told you Guinevere?" he asked her seriously.

She shivered a little. Then she pulled herself together and said:

"I've forgotten about her looks. But her character——"

"I've forgotten what Tennyson may have said about her looks," answered Jerry indifferently. "As for her character, I'm ready to enter the lists in behalf of it any day. And I know she looked like you. But I really didn't stop up here on the top of the world to tell you what you look like. I wanted to ask you—do you know what I've always dreamed of doing?"

"How should I know? I don't know anything about you."

"And yet you know everything that is worth knowing—that I am yours and that you are mine. I always knew that it would happen to me like this—to meet my true mate and to recognize her and to have her recognize me. I was not always sure that it was to be all so unobstructed and happy, her love and mine, as ours is. Sometimes I've dreamed that she might be already married. But we were to know—we were to have no misgivings about the truth. What things a boy dreams! But I'm glad of all my dreams. I'm glad I knew from the moment when first the knowledge of love and life touched me that there was to be nothing vulgar, nothing temporizing, about my meeting with her—with you.

"Think of it, Gail! Think of introductions, think of chaperons, think of

stupid, fat dinner tables, and of silly, giggly dances! Think of sitting out inane comedies of high life, in carefully duennaed theater parties! Think of all the testing, all the weighing, that the average man and woman go through before they decide that they are in love. In love! You might just as well have to be informed by degrees whether the sun has risen! Thank God, we shall never have to look back upon any season like that!"

Gail looked at him and opened her lips to speak, but closed them again. Once more the magic night had her in its power. They must go on, they must reach some region of commonplaceness, where the truth might be told. Out here, in the mad moonlight, it would be idle to deny fairy stories. They must come to a place of prose, and there she could tell him the prose truth.

"What was it you started to say to me?" she asked him. "Before you said that about—about Guinevere?"

"I was going to tell you—to ask you—something. Sometimes I've pictured to myself the first night when I should be alone with—you—with the woman I love, I mean. And that, of course, has meant you from the beginning, though I didn't know it. And I've always thought how wonderful it would be to spend that beautiful, first night of withdrawal out of doors, under the wide night sky. I've thought how we would talk, she and I—you and I—under the stars. I've thought how the air would feel upon our faces, how the sky, so deep and mysterious, would rest upon our eyes. I've thought how the dawn would come, and by and by the splendor of the sun. Have you had a dream like that? Or are you thinking me a silly ass?"

"I—I— Oh, please drive on!" Gail's voice was harsh. "Please drive on! I must talk to you. I can't do it out here in the middle of the world and the moon!"

"Poor girl, she thinks she's drawn a most inconsiderate husband! I don't know that you're not right. What I should be doing is making tracks for the city and for supper. Do you realize that you didn't eat two mouthfuls at the Hortons' dinner? I was watching you. You ate nothing. You only drank two glasses of champagne."

The car was rolling on again. He had withdrawn his gaze from her face. It was easier for her to talk now.

"I am hungry," she confessed. "And as for the champagne, do you know, I never drank any before? I never drank any wine."

"A little White Ribboner?" he inquired indulgently.

"No. But—do you realize that you don't know anything about me? Do you realize that all those bits of knowledge you thought of as vulgar are necessary? Perhaps"—her voice broke, but it was with a hopefulness—"if you had known that my father was a periodic drunkard, you wouldn't have wanted to marry me?"

"Ah! That accounts for it—that accounts for the look of repression upon your face! Something there was I didn't understand. It was all beauty, and I knew you for mine, but there was something I didn't understand—a watchfulness, a terror overcome, kept in leash. It's made you more beautiful, Gail, but you must forget all about it now. You're not your father. I like to think that every human soul has its own chance. I hate this making them all wear a lot of spiritual hand-me-downs. You're not going to be a periodic drunkard, and you're going to get over your fear of yourself and of your instincts."

"You are— Oh, I don't know what you are!" the girl cried despairingly. "Drive on just as fast as you can and let us come to some place where we can sit down in the glare of an electric light, on a stupid, stuffed sofa, and



He caught her hands and held them against his breast, drawing her closer and closer to him.  
And as fear increasingly overmastered her, she kept crying, "No, no, no!"



talk realities! All this—all this you've been saying, all this we've been doing—it's moonshine—moonshine and May and wine—and—it isn't real, it isn't real!"

He turned one quick, startled look upon her, then bent his glance forward upon the road again. For an instant his face was grave. Then it lightened. The irrepressible, irresistible smile dented his lips.

"I'll back my moonlight against your electricity to be real after this little planet has hurtled itself off into outer darkness," he challenged her. "The matter with you is, my darling, that you're hungry and excited and tired. And you're going to be fed and tranquilized and rested. And then we'll talk about these tawdry little realities of yours!"

### CHAPTER III.

It was half past one in the morning, and they sat on opposite sides of a little table in the middle of a hotel sitting room. They had made the trip to town without mishap and in excellent time. Jerry had sought to learn his wife's preferences in the matter of a hotel, and had found that she had none. So they had come to the old-fashioned, quiet, well-kept hostelry which he always patronized in New York. He had ordered supper served to them in their suite, and somehow he had managed, for all the unpropitious hour, to achieve some flowers in the room. It was, even at that, a poor enough substitute for the moonlit night of the countryside. But despite the warnings she had uttered, he was so convinced of the essential reality of his dream that he was not disturbed by externals.

"You didn't change into something more loose and comfortable," he rebuked her, after the waiter had lifted covers from some of the dishes, had lit the lamp beneath the glass coffee urn, and had left the room.

"No," replied Gail monosyllabically. "But this dress is comfortable enough."

"Was it a literal truth of Mrs. Horton's when she said she had lent you all the things you would need? Or is there something else?"

"I hadn't brought anything up to the Hortons'," answered Gail. "I was only there for dinner. Oh, my God!"

The sudden release of all her pent-up horror brought his eyes to her face.

"What is the matter, Gail?"

He spoke almost curtly. He might have been his official self speaking to a private in his command. The dreamer, the glad, romancing boy that she had known for six days, was suddenly obliterated.

"Don't you see? Don't you understand? It was madness, our marrying! It was—— I don't know what it was!"

He leaned back and gazed at her. Through all her self-absorption there pierced a surprise that a face as tanned as his could show such pallor, that eyes as blue as his could be so black. But, after a moment's look at her, he said:

"First of all, you must eat. Remember, you've had no dinner and you've been living under a good deal of excitement for the past few days. You can't tell me anything, you can't ask me anything, until you've taken that bowl of broth and have followed it"—he lifted the cover of the chafing dish on a side table drawn up close to the one where they supped—"with these sweetbreads. Don't, my dear girl, let hunger hysteria make decisions for you instead of your reason. And whatever it is that you have to tell me, remember it can't be the most dreadful or the most stupendous thing that has ever been heard in the world."

She tried to smile, and she tried to obey his behest about eating. She did, indeed, succeed in drinking her chicken broth. He, too, fortified himself for what he was about to hear with food, and not until he had finally poured her

a cup of coffee and watched her drink it did he allow her to speak.

"You won't mind if I smoke? Of course you won't! You smoke yourself."

He passed the cigarette case to her, but she shook her head.

"Not now," she murmured. "Not now. But you smoke."

we can't, we can't, we can't go on with it!"

"This is serious," he said. It was obvious that he used the words only as a means of giving him time. "Are you"—he swallowed hard, but went on—"are you, by any sinister chance, married already?"

"No. Oh, no!"



"And all the time I was saying to her: 'Go, go, go! Give it up! You can't fight me! I hold all the weapons! Go, go, go! Oh, I made her suffer!'"

"And now, dear-lady-of-the-dream-come-true, what is it you have to tell me?"

"I have to tell you," answered Gail, almost breathlessly, her gray eyes fixed steadily upon his blue ones, "that I ought not to have married you. I have to tell you that we—that we mustn't stay married. I have to tell you that

There was no questioning his relief. His tense pose relaxed.

"I'm glad of that," he told her. "I'm really glad of that. Mind you, Gail, I don't set up to be any sort of Daniel come to judgment, and I've always firmly declined to draw up a little set of specifications to which my elect lady had to conform. But I'm glad that

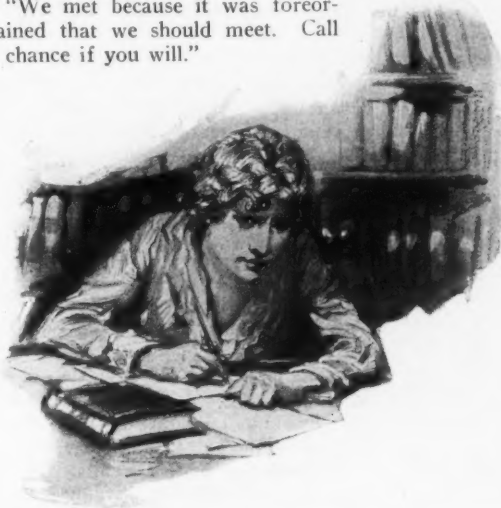
she isn't a bigamist." He smiled on her. "Then, what is it?"

"We don't know each other."

"We know that we love each other, don't we?"

"No. No, we don't know anything about each other. We met only six days ago. We met by chance——"

"We met because it was foreordained that we should meet. Call it chance if you will."



"If there hadn't been that camp outside Clearfield," Gail went on stormily, "you would never have been sent there to instruct. And even though you came, we would never have seen each other if that friend of yours hadn't given you a letter to Professor Howe and hadn't put you up at the country club. Why, at this moment, I don't know anything about you, except that you came from California and that you're an engineer in times of peace and a captain of engineers now. I know how you look, of course. I know how—how—you make love——"

"I don't make love," he said briefly. "I love. But go on with the things you don't know. I can tell you all about myself—all the 'facts,' as you call them—in fifteen minutes. And the spirit—

Gail, do you mean to tell me that our spirits didn't know each other in our first look?"

"No. It was all glamour. It was all romance. We can't go on with it!"

"Dearest, if you want my 'Who's Who' biography, for Heaven's sake, let me give it to you. If it'll make our love and marriage seem more real to you to know that my father, Jeremiah Blair, owns two thousand acres of orange grove in southern California, that he's been frequently returned to the State senate, that my mother is Ann Woodruff Blair, and that she's the only old-fashioned woman left in the State of California, if not in the whole world—if those things will help to clear the air for you, know them, Gail! If it'll make the reality more real for you to know that I attended Leland Stanford University, without

conferring any particular distinction upon it, know that, too!

"Do you want me to tell you that I've never been 'in love' before? I don't have to tell you that. I'm twenty-six. I've always known, ever since I knew anything, that some day I should meet—you. When I tell you that I've always kept myself for you, I don't want you to misunderstand me. I haven't fought off carnal temptations by telling myself that you were waiting somewhere—I haven't had them. I haven't kept myself from philandering by reminding myself that some day I should need a perfectly untarnished set of emotions to offer—you. I haven't wanted to philander. In fact, my dear, my life has been, at every step, so happy, so—so adventurous—that I

never seemed to need those fillips to sensation which some men seem to need. It's been glorious, all of it. Why, even this war—do you remember what I told you about this war the day your Doctor Horton was getting off that bored, semipacifistic, semihopeless stuff of his?"

"Yes. That is, I remember you said something— Oh, I don't know!"

"I said that I couldn't kid myself into pretending that I was keen about it for the sake of democracy and all that," he reminded her. "Of course, I'm for a good cause rather than a bad one. But I have a dark suspicion that I should be just as keen about it if I were a German, and knew in my heart that we didn't have a leg to stand on of right or justice. Because it's the adventure of the thing that gets me. Think of it, Gail! How I love your name! Think of it! Three or four years ago, it seemed that all the adventure a man of my time would know was the ordinary adventure of living. Oh, that was enough for me! But that all the tourneys were done, and that fellows of our generation would never know that splendid fun of a fight, would never have smoke sting our nostrils— And then came the biggest war of all! I tell you, Gail, I look at my uniform as if it were Ivanhoe's armor! They haven't a thing on us, those old boys!"

"You medieval creature!" Gail twisted her lips into a faint smile.

"What you're really saying," he told her, smiling in his turn, "is: 'You insufferable egotist, talking forever about your sentiments!' But I only wanted to show you, dear girl, what I thought I had been showing you every second since we met—that I believe in romance and adventure, that I know they are true—and that our romance is true because it's the crown of them all. That's the main truth, isn't it—the main fact, since you're so fond of facts?"

"But what about me?" she cried.

"I don't think I understand. Do you mean that I don't know all about you—whether you take lemon or cream in your tea, or want to vote, or go to the Presbyterian or Unitarian church? No, I don't know some of those things yet. That's one reason our life is going to be so wonderful. We shan't go stale on each other before we've half begun to live."

"Please stop talking nonsense and listen to me!" cried Gail. "It isn't an adventure! It isn't your dream come true! It's something quite different. I didn't fall in love—"

"You didn't fall in love with me?"

"No."

"But our meeting—in Mrs. Horton's sitting room, among all those daffodils—and our talk. And our leaping at once to real things, to the heart of life? And her coming in, and our scarcely heeding her? And all our talks, our thoughts leaping together? And our—why, Gail, our caresses—our kiss last night! What do you mean by saying that you didn't fall in love with me?"

Gail's pale-gold braids, folded crown-wise about her little head, framed a face that reddened and then went white.

"I mean that I didn't fall in love with you—that I don't love you," she said steadily. Then, in hurried justification: "It's ridiculous to expect any one to be in love with a stranger—"

"If you didn't love me, why did you—what was it you called it?—why did you let me 'make love' to you?"

"It was a flirtation," she said, steady, emotionless again, though once again her face was flaming.

"A flirtation! Oh, that is too banal, too— Flirtations, Gail, are the sport of groundlings. You can't convince me that you're a groundling."

"But I am. I told you that you didn't know me. I'm proving it to you."

"But if you were flirting with me—it's a sickening term!—why, in God's name, did you marry me?"



She had given a little gasp of fright and apology. "Don't go," he had said.

Now her face grew white.

"I—I don't know," she almost whispered. Her eyes, gray, large, emphasized by dark brows and lashes, looked out at him ashamed, bewildered. "I don't know. I—I kept thinking that it—it was going to stop, that some one—some one would stop it. After the telegram came this afternoon, summoning you back to camp—and— Oh, I don't know how I felt—or what I thought! You'll despise me—you'll despise me forever, and I deserve it—but—it was as if I were hypnotized—"

"My dearest girl, you obeyed the

deep, instinctive voice of your nature," he told her, his troubled face clearing. "You thought you were flirting, but you weren't. You went on, blindly, unreasoningly, because it was nature—and love—that made you. You see, Gail, we all live so artificially that when we obey our instincts quite simply, we're apt to think that we're being foolhardy and insane. That's all that has happened to you. It's now that you are muddled—now, when you're trying to explain, in terms of your beloved 'facts,' a perfectly good miracle that happened to you!"

"You're quite mad," said Gail. "I'm

trying to be honest, and you keep on with your absurdities. Listen, please, now—and see if I can make you understand. I don't quite know why I let the affair go on to—tonight. But I flirted with you for the purpose—how vulgar you will think it!—of making another man jealous. I wanted to make him jealous because he had made me jealous. I was—I am—in love with him. That is the truth. Now do you see that we can't go on with this—marriage of ours?"

He sat rigid for a minute. In his fingers was a cigarette, and the ash burned to a long stick upon it. His brown, sinewy hand was steady. At last he knocked the ashes off and quenched the spark slowly.

"You must have thought me very stupid, and a great egotist, as well," he said finally. "I am—both. But—what you did was scarcely sportsman-like, and—and—you'll forgive me, but I never happened to have intimate dealings before with any one who wasn't a good sport."

"You can't say anything to me," faltered Gail, "one-half so dreadful as I deserve, one-half so bitter as I'm saying to myself. I—I've been unpardonable."

It was amazing, it was terrible, to her to see how the last five minutes had expunged from his face the compelling look of confidence, of gay expectancy. With that gone, he was sharply older, and yet, with that gone, there was something so movingly the look of a little hurt boy that she could have wept for sheer pity.

"The man?" he said suddenly. "May I know who he is?"

"I—I— Oh, yes! You have the right to know anything you want to know. It is—it is—Professor Horton."

She kept her head erect, her eyes steady.

"I supposed so. I— How long—"

"I don't know. Sometimes it seems to me that almost ever since I went to

Clearfield—that is four years now. But it's only two since—since we—knew."

He looked at her sharply, studying her.

"And Mrs. Horton?"

"They never cared—that is, she never understood, sympathized— Oh, what stupid things you make me say! But it's the truth. I myself saw it for two years. It wasn't just that he told me so. Her own life, her own interests, her own excitements—they are all she cares for. Intelligent of course she is—uncannily, intuitively. But she hasn't a particle of intellectual interest, and his life was all of the intellect."

"Until you came," Blair corrected her. She colored.

"I was only part of his intellectual life at first," she said. "I want you to believe me. It hasn't been base, our—our affection. It has done no one any wrong."

"Except," he reminded her, with a sudden cold contempt that startled her and made her shrink back from him across the narrow table, "except your husband."

She had no answer ready. Partly bewildered, partly shame, but chiefly fright, held her silent. The man looking upon her now was not the man with whom she had been treading the dangerous path of flirtation these past six days, not the nice boy with the confident, smiling eyes who had married her that evening, not the man of whom she had thought, illogically, preposterously, that even she might make of him a friend. This man's face was set, his blue eyes were dark with sudden passion. He pushed back his chair from the table and rose, and her trembling hand pressed itself against her trembling lips. She feared that she was going to cry out in terror.

"All this is very pretty," he said roughly, the shining young knight-errant gone from his look and from his voice. "But, after all, you are my wife,



and that not by any trick or force of mine. You are my wife because you chose to be. I think I shall remember that and forget all the rest you have been telling me."

She pushed her chair back so as to be farther away from him and slowly rose from it, keeping her eyes wildly upon him.

"I know I have done wrong," she said flutteringly. "I know it. I've acknowledged it. I've told you—and indeed I told you the truth—that I've scarcely known what I was doing. All the time I thought: 'This will be the end.' But the end never really came until we were driving along the road together in the quiet and the cool and the moonlight. Then I came back to myself. You—you can't despise me more than I despise myself—"

"Don't bother about how I despise you," he interrupted. "It's how I love you, how I want you—that is what you had better worry about."

He took another step toward her. He caught her hands and held them against his breast, drawing her closer and closer to him. He bent above her until his lips were almost upon hers. She pushed feebly against him. She kept crying, faintly and more faintly as fear increasingly overmastered her, "No, no, no!" But just as she closed her eyes against the threat in his, and felt a wave of faintness engulf her, he abruptly released her.

"Good God!" he cried. "I've come a long way to-night! A long way! Why, it isn't five hours since I was begging you to spend your wedding night out under the stars, contemplating the heavens"—he laughed savagely—"and here I am trying to coerce another man's woman! I didn't know I was such a brute! Sit down again, please. You needn't be afraid."

She sank down into her chair again, but kept her astonished, timid eyes still upon him. He walked rapidly up and

down the room. Finally he pulled a chair out from behind the table and sat down again, facing her.

"Let's see what's to be done. I've had my sailing orders. That, of course, was the real cause of our marriage. Three days more and I'm off. There doesn't seem to be any reason why you should eliminate me by process of law when a dose of gas or a piece of shrapnel will do it for you so much less mussily."

"Please, please don't!" Gail begged him.

He glanced at her as if surprised.

"Oh, I meant it. I wasn't talking for effect. The fortune of war seems to me what I said—less mussy than the other alternative. At any rate, you don't need to take any steps about annulment or divorce, or whatever it would have to be, until after it's certain that I'm not going to give you the easier way out, do you? It isn't as if your precious professor were going to marry you. If he had been going to, I suppose he'd have arranged a divorce with his unsympathetic wife long ago."

"There's something I want to say," Gail struck in. She was flushed again with embarrassment. "I want you to understand about him—and me. There's nothing—there has been nothing—Oh, how can I tell you? I've told you already that our affection did no one a wrong. I meant it. A while ago, you called me—you called me his—'his woman.' If you meant—if you meant that I was his mistress—that wasn't so. I won't have you think such things of me, or of him. Our—our relation was not upon that plane." At the end of her speech, she achieved almost the effect of pride.

"You poor, starved child! Do you think that what you are telling me makes either of you any better in my opinion? It doesn't. It makes him a degree more cowardly than I had thought him—that's all. As for you—"



She had to listen to the teachings of the farmers and gardeners. The work was too new to her to be done uninterestedly.

Oh, I don't know! The conventions are curiously knit into a woman's fiber. They allow herself to call herself honest when she robs another woman of the pure gold of life and leaves her the dross! You claim to be kind and virtuous because, I suppose, you've only read poetry together, or held hands in the twilight, or kissed behind the door——"

"Don't, please!" Gail interrupted again. "I won't have you vulgarize everything so! You speak as if it had been an affair of the housemaid's!"

"Instead of an affair of an intellectual affinity?" He looked for a moment almost as if he were about to mar the





lines of his face by a sneer. But the expression changed, softened, saddened a little, as he looked at her, fair and exquisite, proud, ashamed, and suffering. "Ah, well! Why despise even the housemaid's clandestine romance? And as for you—and him—I don't know that I'm prepared to admit your affair any more high-minded than hers. Anyhow, that isn't my problem. My problem is how to get you out of the mess into which my romanticism and your—your——"

"You've already called it my vulgarity," she told him, bitterly supplying the term.

"Whatever I called it in my first sense of having been unpardonably cheated doesn't matter. The thing isn't even to make satisfactory definitions—it's to extricate ourselves. Are you in a hurry for your freedom again? Or will you let it wait upon the fortunes of war?"

"As for me, it could wait forever," Gail answered impatiently. "But you—you will want it. Let me finish." She put up her hand to stay his interruption. "You are far more likely to need it than I. Don't you see what you have shown yourself? Impulsive, enthusiastic, swept along on the current of your own emotions— Oh, it will happen to you again!"

"No, that phase is past."

"It will happen to you again," she insisted. "It's you who need freedom. As for me"—she held her head a little higher yet, and faced him with her air of invincible pride—"freedom is nothing to me. My life is fixed—fixed!"

But in spite of resolution, her face quivered into grief. She hid it against her arm and sobs shook her. He watched her pitifully, but said nothing. What was there he could say? As he saw it, she had bartered her woman's birthright, her youth's birthright, of high, clean, glorious romance for a most miserable mess of pottage.

"So you see," she resumed, after she had had her little spell of tears, "it doesn't matter to me at all, practically, this tangle. It won't change my condition. Of course I want to be free from it. For your sake first, and then—oh, just for the sake of freedom itself!"

"There's one thing you haven't considered," he told her. "Your—your lover"—she winced at the word—"may have a new view of the situation. It's been all very comfortable for him these two years. He thought he had you safe from competition, and he was able to use you—your mind and your devotion and your warped sense of romance—without endangering his place on the faculty, or any of the other little things he prized. But now he may realize danger. In less than a week, he has seen all his structure of careful, bloodless selfishness"—there came a savage heat into his voice; at last he was expressing some of the bitterness of disappointment and humiliation that had claimed him—"swept to the ground. He'll be afraid that it might happen again. He'll have learned to be afraid, deathly afraid, of a rival. He'll want to divorce his wife and to marry you. You'll need your freedom. I—I should rather leave you my allotment——"

"I wouldn't touch it!" she cried furiously. "I've earned my living for six years! I don't need alms from any one, least of all from you!"

She looked at him angrily, but at the expression in his eyes—hurt, newly aged, but pitiful—the anger died out of her own. She felt again the wave of remorse; it was she who had killed his look of the glad young conqueror.

"Oh," she cried, in abasement and grief, "I am so sorry, so sorry, for everything! You'll never forgive me, but I wish, I wish that you could! And—all the rest of it—can't you leave it—can't we leave it—in some lawyer's hands to get us out? Not because of

what you say," she added, with a deep stain of color, "about—about Jaspar Horton, but just because of you and me, let's get clear of it all—without talking any more about it ourselves."

"I dare say that will be better." He looked at his watch. "Good heavens," he cried, "it's half past four! It's a crime! I've kept you up all night, talking—talking——"

"But not out under the stars, not about all your beautiful verities," said Gail, rising. "Only about my ugly facts."

Her eyes were dark from the strain of weariness and excitement. But she was lovely, standing there, pale and sweet, unlike in the little dinner gown of gray she had worn over to the Hortons' dinner that crowded evening. Jerry's heart beat a trifle tumultuously at the look of her. But he put the tumult down. He kissed her hand.

"Go in and go to bed. Sleep until noon. And then we'll meet for breakfast, and I'll be able to make you some report on the best way to get out of the tangle. I'll get a taxi and go down to the club, and get three or four hours' rest. I'll see Davidge—he's a lawyer fellow I know—and then I'll come at noon and report to you. That'll be all right, won't it?"

She nodded.

"You are good," she said, "good and kind——"

Then she turned abruptly from him and went into the bedroom and closed the door. She opened Bettina's new satchel from Paris and drew out all the intimate, airy things with which Bettina had packed it for the hasty wedding journey. She hated to use them. As soon as the shops were open in the morning, she would go out and buy the things she needed—plain, sensible things, not lace and ribbon and rosebuds like these! And then, she thought, she would burn these up somewhere, and the satchel with them. She took a vin-

dictive pleasure in the thought of that holocaust. It was almost as if she would be burning Bettina—Bettina, who was responsible for everything; Bettina, who did not love her husband, who gave him nothing that he desired to have, who neglected and forsook him for every whim, and who then dared to come back and claim him again, torturing her, Gail, with jealousies; Bettina, who, cunning, malicious, had somehow engineered this marriage! Oh, she hated Bettina!

Then her native pride and honesty came back.

"You poor, weak thing!" she said to herself, in contempt. "To try to find a scapegoat for your own miserable weakness and vanity!"

She snapped off the lights that showed her to herself in the mirror. At the moment, she could not bear the sight of her slim, white-and-rose-clad loveliness.

"The sport of groundlings!" she repeated to herself. "It's true—that is what I am; and that is what my whole life has been—a groundling's. And all the time I was pretending to myself that I was living a more wonderful experience than ordinary humans could have!"

Her tears were hot upon her pillow. But by and by she slept.

#### CHAPTER IV.

After he had accompanied the last guest to the hall door, with old-fashioned, informal cordiality, Jaspar Horton came back to the dining room where Bettina stood before the fireplace. There was a little blaze upon the hearth, for the May night was chilly indoors. On the dulled gray oak table, with the big bowl of yellow jonquils and runners of coarse gray-and-blue homespun linen, there was a litter of delicate, flower-shaped glasses and of little plates, grayish and bluish, that Bettina had brought home from one of her



flights into Italy. Near the fireplace was a great copper amphora, loot from another journey, and it was full of big branches of lilac. Bettina, slender and boyish in her uniform of khaki-colored cloth, stood with feet rather exaggeratedly wide apart and hands clasped behind her back. The leaping orange and rosy flames behind her and the soft effulgence of the shaded candles on the table and of side lights on the wall were kind to her, and her pretty, thin, mocking little face seemed young as a boy's.

Jaspar avoided looking toward her, though her eyes challenged him. He walked slowly toward a side table and fished a cigarette from an old iron box, inlaid with enamel, which Bettina had brought home from one of her wanderings. He was a well-made man, not tall, but compact of figure, gracefully light upon his feet. Indeed, as Bettina had told him once—with her gift for mentioning the unpleasant, but incontrovertible truth—it was only his stoop that saved him from being positively dapper. The stoop, however, gave him no effect of slouchiness or of age; it was rather the polite, meaningless deference of a man of the world—the sort of a stoop he might have acquired in bending to utter low-toned compliments to pretty women—than the real bend of the bookworm. And Jaspar's neat, pointed beard, a careful Vandyke in whose brown only a little gray had begun to appear, aided the worldly, sophisticated effect of his carriage.

Bettina, watching him with soft, malicious amusement, saw that the fingers which busied themselves with the cigarette and the matches were not steady. He had beautiful hands, like an artist's, long-fingered, sensitive. For years she had known how to gauge his mood by them. He had an admirable control over his features and over his pleasant, drawling, bored voice. But his hands were sometimes beyond his will.

"Let me strike it for you," she volunteered, mischief in her voice.

"Thanks, I think I've got it now."

He lit the cigarette and took one or two long puffs at it. Then he met her eyes. Bettina bubbled into laughter.

"Poor dear!" she gibed. "Not even for true love's sake is he quite willing to have his perfect secretary torn from his ar—from his typewriter, I mean. Jaspar, have a heart! Remember that you were young once yourself. Try to see it from their point of view."

Over her husband's face a slow, angry red spread. He looked her steadily in the eyes, his own purposeful, menacing.

"You're a brave woman, Bettina," he said. "You're not afraid to journey to battlefields, to run all sorts of risk, for the sake of a new sensation. Well, try one here at home. Speak the truth, and demand it!"

It was plain that she had not expected this. An expression of surprise ran over her charming face, but she quelled it.

"The truth? By all means!" she cried, still lightly. "And what, as Pilate remarked upon a famous occasion, is truth?"

"The truth——" he began boldly, and then he paused. His habitual mood of cynical indifference returned upon him. He half shrugged his shoulders. He dropped his eyes before hers, and the flood of dark blood retreated from his face. "Oh, I dare say you're right. We should have to begin with definitions, and—then we shouldn't be much the wiser. Shan't we ring for some one to clear up this mess and go into the library? Whatever else is true or false, it's certain that half-emptied wineglasses and crumby plates are the epitome of all life's dreariness."

"Yes. The sight of any of the used vessels of our appetites or pleasures is repugnant to fine taste, isn't it?" Again she subtly taunted him, her momentary

fear that he was going to turn upon her vanishing in his resumption of his accustomed air.

He walked toward the door, snapping off a light or two as he went. She rang for a maid and followed him. The intense craving for sensation which had dominated her life for years forced her to join issue with him to-night.

He had settled himself by the big library table when she entered the room. The light from a wide-shaded lamp fell revealingly upon him. He was pale. There were dark rings under his eyes. Every wrinkle showed as if newly etched. He was reading and did not look up as she entered the room. She wandered restlessly about for a minute or two, seeking to compel his attention. But he did not raise his eyes until she spoke.

"Jaspar, old dear," she said, "you gave challenge a few minutes ago, and then you retreated from battle. As for me, I'm rather in the mood for fighting. Let's have it out."

"I have no desire for altercation with you, Bettina. So far as I know, I have no grounds for one. You've been pleased to be very charming to me since you came back from France."

"Ah, but I lost you the perfect secretary, all intelligent devotion, all swift understanding and—er—adoration—"

"I don't recognize your culpability in the matter." Jaspar had grown paler, and there was studied restraint in his manner. "If I had to quarrel with any one over Gail's loss, it would be young what's his name—the captain she married."

"But she wouldn't have married the captain—silly girl that she was—but for me!"

She leaned back in her chair and watched him from beneath half-closed lids. She smiled faintly.

"What are you talking about?" he asked roughly.

"I mean"—she sat upright, and leaned forward, her pointed chin thrust out—"that I got tired of seeing her around, that I meant to drive her away from here. That young Blair came. It was a lucky chance—it clinched the affair. But I had made up my mind that she should go away from Clearfield before I went back to France, anyway. I was making her too miserable to stay even before young Apollo, Sir Galahad, Sir Launcelot—whatever ancient or medieval male best suits him—had come into our sight at all. I was tired of her, I tell you!"

The slow, dark red that had overspread his face earlier in the talk returned. His eyes contracted, grew too small, brilliant pin points of angry light.

"You will kindly tell me exactly what you mean!" he commanded her.

"What I say. Oh, I haven't particularly minded the others, Jaspar—the little succession of adoring undergraduates who took your courses, and needed private interviews in the study to help them over the difficulties or walks along the river bank to stimulate their interest. You'll admit that I was always extremely nice to them—"

"You mean that you always overdosed me with them. Yes, I admit that, so far as they are not figments of your active imagination."

"I didn't mind them overmuch," pursued Bettina, scarcely heeding his interruption. "Of course I knew you were a philanderer when I married you. Why not? The ultrafaithful man always seemed to me a good deal of a bore, and I felt sufficient self-confidence to think I could handle the situation. Of course, I knew you wouldn't ever be likely to risk your standing on the faculty, your standing with the trustees, or even with the little group here on College Hill, by kicking over the traces entirely. You'd play the game as the rest of them did—penny ante, Jaspar, penny ante! Why,

"I was even tolerably sure that you wouldn't want to risk the loss of my money!"

"Go on," he said. His voice was hoarse. "Say all that you have to say. For then I am going to speak."

She quailed for a second, but she quickly recovered her bravado.

"Is it an insulting suggestion? I didn't mean that you were more mercenary than most other men, Jaspar. But you've grown used to eating your cake and having it, too. You're a scholar, scorning all rewards but distinction in your line, achievement in your line, and yet you live as if you had invented that compound of alcohol, morphine, and bark which made my grandfather wealthy and has kept half the population of rural America contented with its dull lot! Oh, I didn't mind, I assure you. I was used to it. My own dear father, though he wasn't a philanderer, did the same thing—he lived the scholarly life on the Perkins' Pioneer Bitters income. And I didn't mind it that you did the same thing, Jaspar. I never minded anything—except Gail Center."

"Your intuition was not at fault," he told her brutally. "She was the only rival you have ever had—or should I say the only supplanter?"

"So I made up my mind to get rid of her," Bettina went on, though her clear color wavered a little at his words and his tone. "And so, when I came back from France last month, I tormented her with jealousies—I tortured her with glimpses of all the things she couldn't have. I don't know, I don't particularly care, how far things have gone with you—"

"You wouldn't count them as having gone at all," he said with a sneer. "We only loved each other with all our hearts and souls."

She gasped, and hid the gasp beneath a swiftly lifted hand.

"Ah!" she cried. "And to think that

she is now speeding along a moonlit road with her husband—my poor Jaspar! But, as I began by telling you, it was my doing—mine! You know, dear consort!—she laughed her low, mocking, triumphant laugh—"you can't resist any woman, you can't resist even your wife, especially when she's been absent from you a little while. And so, when I came home, and felt the surcharged air in which you two were living, I forced you to acknowledge me and my presence and my charm a thousand times a day—before that jealous girl! I used to take her into my room to lay off her hat and coat when she came up from her boarding house in the morning—my room, all peach-colored and delicately voluptuous, with reminders that you had been there, too—your smoking jacket, your dressing gown, your brier pipe on my ivory dressing table! I perched upon the arm of your chair. You used to touch my hair— Oh, I made her suffer!"

"And all the time I was saying to her: 'Go, go, go! Give it up! You can't fight me! I hold all the weapons! Go, go, go.' And she was almost ready to go when along came that delicious young fool and fell heels over head in love with her.

"And at every hour of their romance, I kept saying to her: 'You must, you must! You've been tortured by the sight of Jaspar making love to his wife. Let him be tortured a little!'

"And then I kept defying her. I kept saying: 'If you dare not let this charming boy fall in love with you, I shall know why, I, Bettina! If you dare to rebuff him now—or—now—or now—I, Bettina, shall have your secret! There wasn't an hour of the day when I didn't concentrate all my will upon conveying that message to her. I bent my very life upon it the afternoon—why, it was only this afternoon!—the telegram came recalling him. I tell you, I forced that marriage—as far as she, your flaw-

less Gail, was concerned. The boy was in a daze about her from the first. But I did it, I—I—I! And I wanted you to know it. Now, what have you to say to me?"

She had worked herself up into a white heat of excitement. She was in the condition in which she loved to be, in which she was always trying to find herself—at the climax of an intense personal drama. She had had a dozen flirtations in her youth, a dozen affairs since her marriage, to satisfy that gnawing hunger for sensation centering about herself. She had rushed pell-mell into twenty "causes," without troubling to know whether she believed in them or not, to satisfy the ever-present craving. She had campaigned the State for this and that great issue, in order that she might taste, upon a platform or a street-corner soap box, from time to time, that violent joy. She had been a picket in Washington, she had served a workhouse term, in behalf of a cause in regard to which she felt a cynical indifference, in order that she might have the intense sensation that she craved. She had gone to France to sate the same thirst. She admitted, unblushingly enough, that she had enlisted in the motor corps because she could not bear that there should be such a whirlpool of excitement in the world as France in 1917 and she not be there, whirling. But to-night, sitting opposite her husband, she was experiencing again what she had half begun to fear was past forever—the sense of stark sex drama.

Her excitement acted as a corrective to his own. As she lost her air of competent, half-mirthful, half-malicious manager of an affair, and revealed herself more and more as the very heart of the play, comedy or tragedy as it might be, which she pretended to be staging, he grew more and more self-possessed. But his self-possession was of a sort new in her experience

of him—not the ease of the man of the world who knew how to hold all things as negligible, but the assurance of a man who sees a path before him he can tread. She was suddenly a little afraid of that new look of his.

"I have quite a lot to say to you, Bettina," he answered her calmly. "This, chiefly—that I am through! You've seen fit to mention your money to-night. Your money is less than nothing to me now. Shall I tell you why? Because, for four blessed years now, I have worked with a woman who really meant what the rest of us have only pretended to mean—a woman who really values intellectual accomplishment and doesn't give a damn for lands and houses and motors and trips to Palestine or Peru. To do clean-cut work, to rejoice in the clean-cut product of that work—that's her standard of happiness. She has made it mine, too. You, who are not intellectual, can't be expected to know anything about that."

He paused there, and seemed to take satisfaction in the harsh sound of the words he had just uttered.

"She has a scholar's mind, that woman," he went on, "and by some blessed chance, she has chosen to dedicate it to my work. She has the beauty of a straight young saint, and she has let me see that beauty flushed and tremulous with the simplest, sincerest sort of love. Until you talked, until you bared your viperish little heart to me, I had thought I was going to try to get along without her decorously. Now I know that I'm not going to do anything of the sort. I'm going after her. I'm going to claim her. I'm going to work with her. I'm going to love her, live with her and for her. She was willing—God bless her!—to work and live for me. She was willing to harness all her talent, all her capacity, to my service. She was willing to stifle every natural impulse of her heart and her young

flesh in order that we might work together blamelessly in the eyes of the world—in your pure eyes, Bettina!"

He laughed. Bettina flamed.

"But she isn't going to do it, for I'm going after her, and I shall live with her and for her—for her and for her ambition for my work. Think of that, Bettina—think of the woman who puts my accomplishment in my field of history ahead of any personal desires she may have! You and I have been married eighteen years, haven't we? And you are thirty-seven and I am forty-three. And in all those barren years, you have never had a selfless thought in connection with me. At first all you valued was what I could give you of stimulation, of sensation, of whatever you call love. And then it was what I could give you of a background from which to try your various flights into new experience. It's all over, Bettina. I'm grateful to you for this night's work."

He rose, he stretched himself up out of the dilettante beau's stoop. His chest seemed to expand, his color to glow. Bettina watched him with half-fascinated eyes. Then she smiled.

"It's too bad," she said slowly, distilling every word venomously, "that you waited so long to learn—what do the stories call it?—to learn 'to know your own heart.' For by this time she is not what she was. By this time, she has had an opportunity to contrast the milk and water you offered her, in return for all her wonderful intellect and devotion, with the wine of another man's passion. I'm afraid you'll be a little late, Jaspar, my friend. And I know that you don't mean a word you say. You may think that you do. But"—she laughed—"as you've just recalled, you're forty-three, and for eighteen years you've been cultivating atrophy of the will, of the desires, of all the energies. You'll never do it, Jaspar. But I shan't hold it against you that you've threatened me. Indeed,

you've given me quite an exciting hour, and I'm grateful for it."

She rose, smiling, yawning a little.

"Good night, old dear. I'll see you in the morning."

He did not reply, and she raised her eyebrows mockingly as if rebuking him for his unmannerliness. She swaggered out of the room with her confident, graceful, boyish air.

In the morning, however, he was gone from the house. Later in the day, there came a letter from him, in order, he said, that she might be spared the embarrassment of not knowing as much of his plans as his fellows on the faculty. He had made arrangements for his assistant to conduct his final examinations of the term, and had notified the dean that he would not be in Clearfield again for the season.

"I have not assigned any but a perfunctory cause," his letter ran. "You may give out as much or as little as you please. But you must understand one thing—if you do not take steps toward a divorce at once, I shall."

## CHAPTER V.

Through the flap in her tent, Gail saw the dark bulk of a bush opposite. She was conscious of half a dozen other little tents about her. The light from the cottage fell across the grass and she watched it, fascinated, wondering when it would be extinguished and all the world would lie in darkness.

She was very tired. The unaccustomed labors of the day had wearied her beyond anything in all her experience. She had been promising herself to give to calm retrospection her first night in the new life she had chosen. It had been, indeed, for that reason that she had chosen this work for the summer—she had been so sure that in it she would be divorced from the fever of excitement in which she had been living, that she could weigh things dispassionately. But she was too tired.

Reflection would have to wait until her muscles had adjusted themselves to physical labor and until they, with their multitudinous capacity for aching, were no longer the chief fact in her universe.

She admitted to herself that there had been something ignoble in the way in which she had run out of the situation created by her own folly or weakness—whatever name she might give to the emotions that had led to her marriage. She had not waited for Jerry's return to the hotel as she had promised. Instead, she had left the note, the inevitable note of the runaway wife—she had smiled a little sardonically as she had left it, recognizing its inevitability—upon the pincushion. She had had no better excuse for refusing squarely to face him and the issue than that she did not want to see him again—could not bear to see him again. She had left in his hands the entire responsibility for getting them both out of the tangle into which she had gotten them.

And then she had gone out, thanking her destiny that she had a tiny bank account in New York, and had supplied herself with funds in a limited way. Furnaces and fireplaces being impossible of access to a stranger in New York in May, she had carried Bettina's satchel of hateful finery to the parcel room of a railway station and, leaving it, had gone out into the street and, tearing her claim check into bits, had thrown it into the gutter. It had given her a satisfaction entirely disproportionate to the triviality of the act. After that, she had gone to a shop and outfitted herself with a puritanical passion for severity. To buy things plain, serviceable, even ugly, had given her the happy sense of defying Bettina.

Then, a free lance, she had walked the street for a while. She could not go back to Clearfield—not yet. Once Jerry's regiment had sailed, she supposed she might return. Probably they would all expect her.

Then she had suddenly become aware, with the swiftness of divination, that she did not want to go back to Clearfield, that she could not do it. It was not that she shrank from the misery of an explanation with Jaspar—what explanation was there? It was not that she feared to face Bettina's mockeries—she felt strong enough, for the first time in two years, to defy them. It was not Jaspar, it was not Bettina, who would keep her away, who made it impossible for her to return. It was, insanely enough, the look on Jerry's face as they had rolled smoothly down the moonlit road.

It was while she was in this detached mood that her eye had fallen upon a sign in a window—"Women's Land Army of America: Recruits Wanted." She had stopped and looked at it. She had walked on to the corner; it was idiotic, she had told herself—the impulse she had to go up the steps and into the hall. Surely she had had enough of acting upon impulse to last her for a while at least! But at the corner she had turned and walked back. After all, why not? There could be no harm in inquiring what the requisites of a recruit were.

She had gone up the brownstone steps; the Land Army was housed rather luxuriously on the first floor of an old-fashioned house on a side street. The girl at the desk in the hall had seemed enormously glad to see her. Gail inferred that recruiting had been slow that morning. The young secretary at the desk in the office had seemed even gladder.

"I came to see about enlisting. I don't mean that I am sure I want to," Gail had begun.

"I'm glad you came to see about enlisting, instead of coming to see about engaging a whole staff of workers for your country place," the young woman at the desk had declared with vivacious relief. "There have been eight





And one of the photographs—her heart seemed suddenly to stop beating—one was of Jerry Blair.

of them this morning, and they've all been highly indignant, and intimated that the Land Army movement was a fraud, because I couldn't supply them out of hand. Have you had any farm experience?"

Gail had not had any farm experience, but she was none the less sure that agriculture would reveal all its secrets after a day or two of practical intercourse with it. The girl at the desk had not been quite so sure.

"Though you do look strong," she had conceded after an appraising look at Gail's strong, pliant figure, with the

flexile, unhampered waist, the erectly held shoulders, the proud, columnar neck.

"I am strong, very," Gail had answered. She had spoken with deep conviction. She had been sure at the moment that, had she not been one of the strongest women in the world, she could never have endured the years of intellectual strain and heart hunger, of hectic emotion and of hard work, which she had lived through with Jasper Horton.

"Do you really think you'd like it?" the secretary had asked dubiously.

Of course, all sorts of young women were coming to headquarters and applying for the patriotic work of cultivating the country's fields, but Gail, with the pale-gold hair banding her broad, thoughtful forehead, with the healthy, creamy tinge of her skin, with the look of repression on her fine-cut features, did not seem exactly like most of them.

Gail, who had gone in without any assured intention of becoming a recruit of the Land Army, had answered with a convinced affirmative. It had begun to tug at her heartstrings, the desire to run away from all that her life had been up to that moment, the desire to lose herself for a while, and, in the losing, perhaps, to find herself again.

The rest had been easy. She had had to furnish references, of course. For a second, she had hesitated. Then she had given them—the president of Harwich College, where she had lived so long, a clergyman there—she had smiled a little wistfully as she had given his name, remembering Jerry's "little detail" of whether she attended the Presbyterian or Unitarian church—and the lawyer in Boston for whom she had acted as secretary during the first two years after she had left the training school.

"I've worked four years since then at Clearfield College," she had gone on. She had reddened as she spoke, but her eyes had held the young secretary's firmly. "If it is necessary, you may apply for information about me to any one there—Doctor Howe, for whom I did a good deal of work; Doctor Hunt, the rector of Trinity; or any one of several others. But to be quite frank with you, I should rather drop out of Clearfield entirely for the present. I should rather not leave any too plain trail—"

A dimple had dented the corner of the young secretary's mouth. She had discerned romance. She was not yet twenty-five, and romance was for her a perfectly adequate explanation of all

mysteries. Besides, as she told her chief later, Gail's face and bearing were all the references she needed.

"I think the recommendations at Harwich and Boston will be all that we require," she had said.

So it had come about. That had been two weeks ago. And now, to-night, Gail the farmerette, as the newspapers would have called her, lay tired, aching, upon the cot in her little tent in the Land Army camp at Lebanon, three hundred miles from Clearfield, three hundred miles from Jasper and the dear delight of working with him and for him, three hundred miles from Bettina and all the intense and poignant life of the last years. Three hundred miles from them; how many, now, from the nice boy whose headlong folly she had so abominably abetted, whose fairy structure of romance she had so cruelly destroyed?

A fellow farmerette in one of the tents began to sing. Gail recognized her voice as that of a little Jewish stenographer, all wiry strength and dark, caustic good nature, who had been her mate in transplanting at Whitlow's farm that day. "Oh, pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, and smile, smile, smile!" she somewhat nasally adjoined her companions. Some one called out a protest. Two or three others took up the melody. The light athwart the grass from the cottage door grew whiter, more distinct, and the voice of the camp mother, commanding silence, was heard.

Gail fell asleep on the last syllable of that command. It was the first night in her twenty-eight years when no walls had intervened between her and the air, the sky. She had expected to be breathlessly, half-fearfully awake. But thanks to Farmer Whitlow's early cabbages and tomatoes, she had lost all sense of strangeness, and slept until a big bell, mounted upon a pole near by, awakened her.

She had only the vaguest and most misty recollections of her mother—shreds of memory at which she clutched only to have them always escape her, an impression of something delicate and gay and sad. The sadness, she supposed, must have been connected with her father's periodic alcoholism, the gayety with her mother's natural disposition. Definite recollection began for her at Harwich, the bleak, old-fashioned sectarian college, with the social standards of a reformatory, where her Aunt Abby—an Abigail who had heartily disapproved of the diminutive that Gail's mother had made of her name—had taught Latin. She had been about five when her father had brought her there. Aunt Abby had been his sister, and as unlike him as possible. She had had the truly pedagogic temperament, capable of intense application, impatient of interruption, shy of close human intercourse. Oh, it had been a crime, Gail felt, to saddle a child upon her, and a crime against the child as well as against her.

He had made periodic appearances after that, her father. She, the lonely, detached little child, had used to wait for those appearances. She had hugged the memory of them during the months that had intervened between them. They had been such holiday times; he had played with her, made life a picnic, a pleasuring, for the day or two. He had brought her gifts, big and little, suitable and unsuitable. Aunt Abby, harassed, thrown out of her beloved routine by these visits, had used to wait resignedly for them to end.

And then, one day, they had ended forever. He had been killed in a driving accident, and Aunt Abby had gone away from Harwich for three days, leaving Gail and Martha, the miraculous maid who kept immaculate and shining the tiny apartment up on Hypatia Street, to bear with each other. They had not succeeded very well.

Martha was more detached from life than Miss Abigail Center, and devoted herself to her occupation, which she interpreted as housecleaning, with the single-heartedness with which Miss Abby devoted herself to Latin. In neither of their lives was there room for a child. When Aunt Abby had come home, she had dressed Gail in black, and had told her, with a frightened face, that her father was dead. Afterward, Gail realized that her aunt had been afraid she would manifest her grief in some way with which it would prove beyond the ability of a professor of Latin, however well disposed, to cope. But the little girl had already learned the lesson of repression. Her heart had ached, her throat had burned with unuttered sobs, but she had earned Aunt Abby's respect and gratitude by not "giving way."

On the whole, she had given the two middle-aged women with whom her lot was cast very little trouble during the next eight or ten years. She had taken kindly, though not ardently, to education, which had pleased her aunt. She had taken kindly to the habits of neatness and order, which had pleased Martha.

It had been something of a grief to Aunt Abby that Gail had shown no particular affection for the Latin language beyond any other. She had always stood respectably well in her classes, but not superlatively so. She had developed no taste for research work, no strong bent for anything scholastic.

"She will never be anything better than a humdrum teacher in a girls' high school," Miss Abby had lamented.

"Maybe she'll marry, ma'am," Martha had said. "It's a higglety sort of life, if you ask me, but some women seem drawn to it."

"Oh, I shouldn't feel I had done my duty by her if I left her just to that," Miss Abby had answered decidedly.

And so all the learning that Gail's receptive, docile mind would take had been crammed into it. But at the prospect of becoming a teacher, she had unexpectedly balked—unexpectedly because, in her quiet way, she had been an obedient girl for all the years, adapting her desires to those of her aunt, unaware, apparently, of any that ran counter to Miss Abby's. And to that excellent woman's dazed inquiry as to why she refused the teaching career, Gail had not been able to urge any well-defined reason. The years during which she had learned how to long without expression and to deny her longings without resentment bore their inevitable fruit of inarticulateness now. She didn't want to teach was all she could say.

Did she want to marry, her aunt had asked her, blushing up to her prominent cheek bones, as if the suggestion were slightly indecent.

Oh, no, Gail had protested, red in her turn.

Aunt Abby had gently pointed out, with the embarrassment a true gentlewoman of the old school would feel in descending to such sordid details, that it would be necessary for Gail to earn her own living.

"Your father left you only five thousand dollars, my dear," she had mentioned, "and I have not dared to invest it in anything more profitable than government bonds. It has been a very tiny income. I shall be able to leave you something—"

"Oh, Aunt Abby!" Gail had begged her to desist.

"But it will not relieve you of the necessity of remunerative work, Gail," the elder lady had gone on mildly. "If you don't wish to teach, you must choose some other branch of effort. But I don't know what else there is."

Gail had said something about being a secretary. She had spoken of the highly efficient young woman who acted

in that capacity to the new president of Harwich, herself an efficient lady who had recently taken office on the high platform of intending to obtain a five-million-dollar endowment for the institution in five years. She was immensely distasteful to Miss Center, and so was her secretary.

"A secretary's life is not so—so consecrated," she had demurred. "Its aim is not scholarship, or—or service to the rising generation. I think you will find more solid joy, and more dignity and safety, too, my dear, in the teaching profession."

Gail had found it on the tip of her tongue to say that neither dignity nor safety seemed the end of life to her, but, instead, she had murmured that she doubted her consecration.

"It is not as if your inheritance made for perfect safety," Miss Abby had said, looking white and miserable.

"My inheritance?" Gail had faltered.

And then her aunt had told her that her father had been a drunkard whose irregularities had broken his wife's heart and whose career after his wife's death had been such that—

"I hate to speak of such things," Miss Abby had said, "but—there was a woman who—who—claimed part of his estate. I may have done wrong by you, Gail, but I could not dispute her claim—could not take it to court—could not air my poor brother's weakness through the papers. She—she compromised. That is why your legacy was so small. It would have been twelve thousand. But I thought that if I took your education and care upon my own shoulders, I would not do you much wrong. And so— But you see why I do not want you to—to run wild. A safe place, a quiet place— It may be in your blood, the taint—"

But she had finally yielded and Gail, leaving Harwich with a modest A. B. to tack after her name, had gone to a good secretarial school in Boston. During

the second year that she had been there, Miss Center had died. Gail had grieved sincerely, but unostentatiously. Reticence and repression had come to be the accepted habit of her life.

From the school she had gone into the employ of Green & Green, lawyers chiefly engaged in the management of estates. "Green & Green" was something of a misnomer, for one Green was not only a silent, but an absent, member of the firm. He lived happily in Rome, playing the antiquary, while his brother managed the business. This Green had treated Gail with entire obliviousness of the facts that she was young, female, and good looking. He had been courteous and respectful in his manner, as he would have been to any worthy piece of office furniture. No one had yet made her aware of her youth, her womanhood, her gift of beauty.

Out of the office, she had lived a lonely life in a refined, well-recommended boarding house. She had heard some good music, looked at some good pictures, taken some good, though lonely, walks, all after the Harwich model, and had discovered for how much she had to thank her Aunt Abby in that she had a fondness for good literature and a student's habits.

Then had come the miracle by which she had been transplanted to Clearfield. They had always called it a miracle, she and Jaspar. How else explain the diversion of the channels of their lives from two separate streams into a single one? Jaspar Horton had not looked up his old friend, Josiah Green, for seven or eight years, but on the very morning when he reappeared there, Gail had just "given notice."

She had found it difficult to explain why she wanted to leave, and had rather succeeded in impressing her employer with the belief that she was insane. Did she want more money? No, that wasn't it. Was she going to be

married? No, oh, no, not at all. Then what? Were her hours too long? Did she need more assistance? Didn't she like the spot where her desk was placed? In all these matters, she had declared herself satisfied. Then what, in Heaven's name, did she want to leave him for, Green had asked irascibly.

"I think it's because I don't find the work interesting," Gail had finally clarified her reasons.

And then Jaspar had happened in, after she had refused to reconsider, to take a week off, to go to Washington, to go to the mountains, to go for a motor trip—anything to break her routine. He had bemoaned, picturesquely, wearily, his trials in the attempt to find a secretary "semi-intelligent, partially educated." And Green had cried abruptly:

"I've got her for you! She won't stay with me."

That had been the beginning of a new and wonderful life for Gail. Sometimes she had counted it as the beginning of all life, the dull, drab years with her Aunt Abby not estimated at all. Harwich had been ugly—staring, institutional buildings ranged along a flat campus. Clearfield was beautiful. The college buildings had a mellow charm. They lay upon a hill, overlooking, in one direction, a silvery thread of river winding its way through a green valley, and, on the other, the industrial city whose gauntness was veiled, for the eyes upon the height, in wreaths of mist and smoke. The college had stood long enough to have some grace of antiquity; the architect who had designed it had not had razed to the ground all the big oaks and maples that stood upon the hill, and these rewarded him now by lending to his work the stately dignity of years. It had all been lovely beyond words to Gail, who had never known that she suffered for want of beauty in her surroundings.

But that had been the least part of

her joyful sense of new life. There was such gayety and color in existence at Clearfield, as it seemed to her in the first happy months. Bettina Horton had been pleased to make much of her, to take her under her wing. On Bettina's recommendation she had been taken to board in the home of the widow of one of the faculty members, a dignified dwelling, full, but not too full, of good old furniture and of good modern company. Clearfield was by way of being modern, merry—"fast," some of the older generation called it. At any rate, it was alive, vital, inspiriting to youth.

And then there had been Jaspar. Jaspar was never so much the scholar that he was not also the man. He had seen Gail's youth, he had seen her beauty, even before he had gauged the possibilities of her mind and training. And it was second nature in him to defer to youth and beauty in women. Gail had suddenly awakened to herself and taken a joy, at once humble and proud, in the gifts she had not realized she had.

It had been months before the glamour had begun to wear off, months before she had found the coldness beneath the warm merriment, the egoism beneath the swift-skimming interest in all the world, the restlessness that was at the base of so much of the activity, the feverish desire for change and excitement that dominated the woman with whom she came most into contact, and whom she had at first wanted, with lonely youth's great craving for companionship and leadership, for a friend.

Gradually she had discerned the flies in the clear amber of her new life, but the first intimation she had had of anything really sinister in Bettina had come one evening when she had been in Clearfield about six months. She had been at dinner at the Horton's. Bettina was always asking her to dine with them informally, and formally, too. While they were smoking in the library

after dinner, Bettina had suddenly announced that she was off the next day on a suffrage-speaking tour in the West.

"Ah, I thought we should be losing you soon. You've been at home almost continuously for half a year, now," Jaspar had said. And then, turning to Gail, he had added: "Come to my office in Zabriskie to-morrow instead of here, Gail." It was Bettina who had insisted, before three months of the acquaintance were out, upon the intimacy of first names all around. Zabriskie Hall was the college building in which Jaspar's courses were given.

"Oh, piffle, Jaspar!" his wife had cried. "Gail isn't such an idiot as to think that a secretary has to be chaperoned at her work! You'll both be ever so much more comfortable working here, as usual. As for my not being here, it's absurd! I haven't been mounting guard over you."

"Nevertheless, Gail, we'll move our equipment over to the college for the present," Jaspar had said suavely, firmly.

Gail's cheeks had burned during the colloquy between husband and wife. She had brought her notes and notebooks over to the college office, however, and during Bettina's absence of two months, she had not set foot within the boundaries of the Lilacs. Her motherly landlady had commended her. Jaspar, she said, had a reputation as a fascinator, and Bettina was notoriously malicious when her jealousy was aroused; and there was "a lot of tattle in a little community like this. And on the whole, my dear, I think you've been very sensible."

A new consciousness, an uncomfortableness, had come into her relations with her employer for a few weeks after this episode. But he had seemed unaware of it and had borne himself toward her with a marked impersonality that gradually put her at her ease again. She had, moreover, taken on



new duties and responsibilities, and she was full of ambition and pride in these. Jasper had discovered how much more than the mere copying down of his words she was capable of; he had begun to use her for research work. Her Italian was meager, but they had agreed that, with study, she could soon fit herself to do a good deal of reading for him. She had begun to take lessons from the instructor in Italian at the college, and Jasper had been patience itself in helping her with private practice. The enthusiasm for study, the lack of which her aunt had lamented in her, had begun to burn clearly. Her training at Harwich had given her the habits of the student; it had been only the spirit that had been lacking. Now that had been supplied. She had used to wonder, sometimes, on moonlit nights when she looked from her window at Mrs. Montague's out upon the slope and the silvery river, what more beautiful thing there could be in life than study—study to enable one to be of use—study in companionship with a true student.

But for the first two years of her stay in Clearfield there had come nothing to tell her what all her passion for work, all her joy in usefulness, all her new-found devotion to the life of the intellect, really meant. She had grown, during them, to hold Bettina in contempt, but she had believed that that contempt was founded upon Bettina's open and ostentatious disregard for intellectual pursuits. Bettina flirted; Bettina flaunted her disregard of her husband's tastes; Bettina did a dozen atrocious things. And Gail admired Jasper as extravagantly as she condemned his wife. She was ready to forgive him the dalliances with which rumor credited him, although she did not greatly believe in them. She felt that her opportunities for knowing him were greater than those of any others. He might occasionally relax a little, but

she knew—ah, she knew!—that he was a great scholar, a great teacher, a wonderful expounder of the dead past.

One day she had come, as usual, to work in his big, airy, comfortable study at the Lilacs. He was not to be there—he had a faculty meeting, and she was merely to go through his mail and his notes for the day's work. She had gone humming up the broad stairway, rounded the corner, caught a glimpse of Bettina's bedroom through the open door, with the balcony outside it and the French ivory and gilt and gray within, and had passed on to the workroom. She had entered without knocking, and she had come upon Jasper sitting bowed upon his desk, his arms stretched straight before him, his head upon them. She had given a little gasp of fright and apology. He had raised his head. He looked at her with weary, miserable eyes. Her hand was on the knob ready for retreat.

"Don't go," he had said.

"Is there anything the matter?" she had asked. "Are you ill?"

"Only sick to death of my life. Only utterly heartsick," he had answered abruptly. It had been true enough at the moment. He and Bettina had been having a row over finances, and these always made life Dead Sea fruit for him.

Gail's heart had ached with pity and with indignation. It was cruel of Bettina to make him suffer like this! She knew that it was Bettina! But she had said, decorously enough:

"I'm sorry—dreadfully sorry. But perhaps I'd better go away——"

"Please don't."

"But haven't you a faculty meeting?"

He had telephoned that he could not attend it, he had said.

"But—Bettina——" The name had choked her. "Don't you want——Shan't I find——"

"You wouldn't find her at home," he



had interrupted. "Don't you know that? No, child—there's one thing you can do if you will—you can stay and let me rest my eyes and my heart looking at you. You're so beautiful and pure—*'So rein und hold.'* You refresh me like dew after sunlight. You—Ah, dear girl, but I am selfish!"

"You are not selfish," she had said, with quivering lips. "You—you have made me all that I am. I owe everything to you. I—I—am happy if I mean anything—worth while—to you."

"Do you mean that, Gail?" His voice had been rough with feeling, with pleading. He had crossed the room to where she sat. He had caught at her hands. "Do you mean it?"

She had been frightened by the leaping of the blood in her veins at his touch. She had been frightened by the look of hunger in his eyes. And yet the fright had been half a rapture. Had she not meant what she had said? Of course she had meant it!

"Yes. Yes—but— Oh, not this, not this!" For he had drawn her to him and was kissing her—her mouth, her eyes, her hair. And for all her breathless little protest, she could not hold him off; she could not withdraw herself from his arms.

Afterward, he had told her that never should it happen again. He had told her everything about himself. He had admitted peccadillos. He had touched her profoundly by admitting that, even in his relation with Bettina, he had not been without fault.

"I had no right to marry her," he had said. "I was old enough to know the difference between love and infatuation—between the great desire of true love and the teasing desire of mere passion. I was to blame. We hadn't been married six weeks before I realized it. But, upon my word, Gail, I meant to do my part. I meant to make the best of my life and of hers. I meant to make it a dignified, companionable thing. But

—you know Bettina. What I hoped for was impossible. We had no children. She—"

He had broken off, and Gail had thought him magnanimous not to go on with that particular indictment of his wife. He had sighed, and resumed:

"It came to this finally—that for solid satisfaction I had only my work—and of that she has always been jealous and contemptuous—and that for relaxation, I have had only the miserable little affairs on which Bettina and all the good people of the town have enlarged to you."

"Bettina never has," honesty had compelled Gail to say.

"Not behind my back. She's clever, Bettina! But she has mocked me in your presence with them—such poor, trivial affairs, Gail! And there weren't many. You've known me, my dear, as no other woman ever has known me—as no other woman ever has wanted to know me. And you realize that my little amours were not many or whole-hearted. You believe me, don't you?"

Gail had believed him. But across the warmth of her championship, across the passion of her belief and pity and protective instinct, there had come a chilling little reflection. It had showed in her eyes. Jaspar had seen it, sensed it.

"What is it you are questioning, dear one?"

"I—I don't mean to be impertinent. But—why have you and she not separated? You have no children to hold you together—"

Jaspar had explained fluently. Bettina had never wanted a separation, he had said; she rather liked the vantage ground of matrimony from which to try all her experiments in excitement. And as for him—did he not owe her what he could give her of what she wished? He had married her—he had taken her for better, for worse.

"I've never wanted freedom—until

—until— Do you know when I began to long for freedom with all my soul, Gail? When you came. But what could I hope that freedom would avail me? I am old enough to be your father—”

“You are not!” Gail had cried.

“A weary, disillusioned man. But, with your coming, youth seemed to come back, and ambition and the belief in fine, high things. Oh, Gail, if I were free—if she would give me my freedom—” He had broken off.

“No, no, no!” Gail had cried. Something deep within her had revolted at the thought of taking *her* happiness out of the wreck of another woman’s established life. And then she had said a wise thing: “If you could bear it all those years—both of you, I mean—you can keep on bearing it. If there has been no reason in the thing itself why you should end it, there is none now, just because you think there might be a little selfish happiness in freedom. No. And I will go away from here—”

But she had not gone. She had compromised with that determination. There was nothing wrong in love, there was nothing wrong in devotion; it was only in taking what did not belong to her, what belonged technically to another woman, that there would be wrong. Most logically she had proven it to herself. She could stay, blamelessly, and work for him, and with him, and know the dear delight of a united effort, for thus she robbed Bettina of nothing. Bettina had no interest in work and its accomplishments. Only they must never again lapse into any expression of love. Not by word or touch, not by look or sigh, must they indulge themselves.

“Child, you don’t know what love is,” Jasper had said, looking at her with a tender, melancholy amusement.

“If you can’t agree to that,” Gail had said very sternly, “I shall have to go away.”

He had agreed. And because she was very earnest and very honest, the two last years of her stay at Clearfield had been sullied by nothing of which she felt that she could justly accuse herself. She and Jasper loved each other. She was proud of his love. She had worked for him, and if she had sometimes longed tempestuously for a union simpler, more human, more happy, she had taken herself to task for her selfishness. Bettina, who had an uncanny intuition, had tormented her with all sorts of malice. Now she would stay at home and devote herself to Jasper with sedulous, cloying devotion for a month. Now she would be off and leave him to the dangerous loneliness. Now she had thrown them at each other’s heads, and now she had interposed between them like the shining sword. She had waited for Jasper to weary of his new love; she had waited for Gail to weary of what seemed to her, Bettina, a barmecidal feast. But she had never been able to lower their guard. Sometimes Gail had looked ten years older than her age, pale and worn with the strain of her unnatural living. Again, spirit conquering flesh, she would seem to shine with an inner radiance.

During Bettina’s absence in France, after the war had begun, Jasper had, as his wife would have said, proved unmanageable to Gail. The uplifting novelty of a love affair lived solely upon the intellectual and spiritual plane had palled upon him. He had laid desperate siege to Gail. He had accused her of heartlessness, of frigidity. The years were slipping away from him, and he wanted her, he wanted his true mate. Why did she keep him so infernally at arms’ length? Was she not flesh and blood as he was? Were they not both big enough, brave enough, old enough, to dare to live their own lives? Was she a conventional coward, or was she merely an utterly sexless woman? And

poor Gail, clutching at all the puritanism bred in her bone and trained into it by Aunt Abby, yet wrought upon by desire and weakened a little, too, by all the freeing influences of her new life, had suffered. And then Bettina had come back, and Jaspar had seen fit to make love to his wife again, and Gail had suffered more.

"See," he had seemed to say to her, "if you will not give me the gold of life, I shall have to content myself

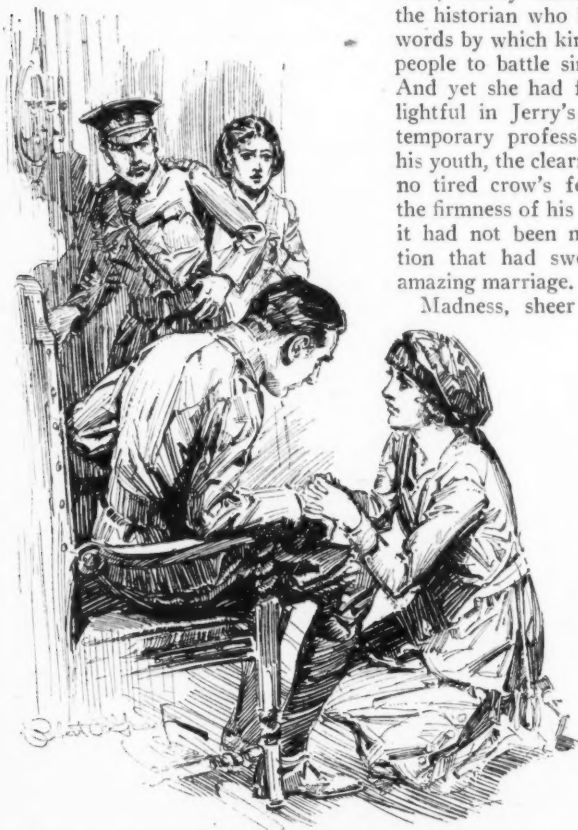
with tinsel; and tinsel is not so bad, if you don't look too close."

And Bettina had flaunted her husband's brief return to the lover in the girl's face—and then had come Jerry Blair, and she had let herself be swept along toward marriage on the current of love and desire and jealousy and she knew not what other coercion.

She had not been able to understand herself. She had accepted Jaspar's attitude toward the war, half cynical, half wise, wholly indifferent—the view of the historian who knows all the catchwords by which kings have driven their people to battle since the records ran. And yet she had found something delightful in Jerry's enthusiasm for his temporary profession. She had liked his youth, the clearness of his eyes, with no tired crow's feet at their corners, the firmness of his close-knit skin. But it had not been mere physical attraction that had swept her toward her amazing marriage.

Madness, sheer madness—that had been it. Temporary aberration, they called it, the medical profession.

A thousand times a day she had gone over and over all circumstances that had led her, Gail Center, strong, sad, secure, knowing the life she had chosen in all its bitterness, in all its recompenses, to that great act of folly, that ill-considered, unconsidered, outrageous marriage, like that of a drunken chorus girl to some young fool, as she told herself contemptuously.



"Jerry, Jerry!" she called. "Have you forgotten me? Have you forgotten Gail? And that wonderful white night?"

But the morning after she first transplanted cabbages and tomatoes at Lebanon, she woke with the ever-present problem for once out of her mind. She only wished that the big, booming bell had not rung so early. Then she jumped from her cot, seized her soap and towel, wrapped a bath robe around her, and dashed to the shower bath among the cedars. She had remembered that she was to be the first user of that novel bathroom, and that nine young women were to come after her.

#### CHAPTER VI.

The Lebanon unit of the Land Army consisted of twenty young women of various walks in life who had pledged themselves to remain in the Lebanon camp from June until October. The camp was situated on the estate of one of the enthusiastic supporters of the Land Army movement, who gave up an unused gardener's cottage at one corner of her place to the housing of the girls, and who zealously canvassed Lebanon and the surrounding countryside for donors of tents, and of furnishings for the house and the tents. The Land Army itself supplied a competent house mother, who acted as a combination cook, housekeeper, and counselor to the party. The young women were hired out in groups of two or more to the surrounding farmers.

The life soon began, to her own surprise, to have a fascination for Gail. She had never before done any hard physical labor. At Harwich she had taken a little perfunctory gymnasium work, but no strenuous exercise. At Clearfield she had learned to play a rather mediocre game of golf. She had learned at Bettina's urging—Bettina herself was a picturesque figure on the course and had a cup or two to her credit from championship contests—but she had not cared much for the sport, and she had not yet come to the time of life when a woman exercises

madly to escape advancing years. Golf had rather bored her.

But farming was different. She liked her Land Army uniform, into which she climbed each morning after the tingling shower in Mrs. Van Loan's sylvan bathroom—a shower primitively piped across the grass. It was becoming to her, too, although her tent did not boast a looking-glass large enough to reveal the fact. She could only infer it from the looks of the other girls in their clean, strong blue costumes of bloomers and long smocks, with stout boots and puttees and farm hats. The work was too new to her to be done dreamily or uninterestedly. She had to listen to the teachings of the farmers and gardeners on the places where she worked, and she had to read books on gardening and farming at night, to keep up with her new job. She liked that, though it continually deferred the quiet hour when she was to sit down with her soul and find out why she had done what she had done, and what she meant to do with the rest of her life.

She liked the smell of the earth in which she worked, and the strong, rank smell of the vegetables—the tomatoes, the onions, the cabbages and cauliflowers. She developed a keen eye for maggots and slugs. She brought, in short, to her new, temporary occupation, all the habits in which she had been trained for so many years—the habits of study, of research, of investigation.

At first she was not greatly drawn to any of the women of her group. They were as varied a lot as possible. There was a patriotic lady of wealth who was emotional about her duty, but whose patriotism and emotion did not hold out after the first hot week in July. There were four or five young working women—teachers, stenographers, and what not—who frankly said that they were taking a health-giving vacation and earning a trifle of money by it. There were war brides who wanted to

be doing "something for the country" because "he" was. Gail fought shy of them at first, but by and by she yielded to their unconsciousness of her aloofness.

After their muscles had become accustomed to the vigorous work, the girls thought nothing of merrymaking after they had done their eight hours. Gail would never go with them when they went off, three or four or half a dozen, to the movie house in the village, a mile from Mrs. Van Loan's place, or on a hay ride with some friendly farmer who had been converted to a belief in their value as adjuncts to the farm. She sat at home in the living room of the cottage and read magazines on cattle breeding or encyclopedia articles on potato scab, instead. But the girls brought back with them, both from their work and their play, stories of all the people in the neighborhood, and sometimes Gail was forced to listen to their gossipy chatter, although it did not interest her.

"Treats you like the dirt under her feet," Mabel Manning was reporting one evening, as she did up her hair in the tent next to Gail's. "She's the first one of that kind I've struck. Mostly, they're too friendly and inquisitive. 'Are you sure you won't eat luncheon up on the piazza?' 'Can't I send you out some tea?' 'Tell me, how did you happen to think of taking up this war work?'" She gave a mocking imitation of a condescending patron of the Land Army. "But not so Mrs. Spencer Jarvis! She walked out in a spick-and-span piqué skirt and white buckskin shoes and a blouse of handkerchief linen and val—a sort of Palm Beach advertisement effect—and she says, with a bored air, that she will try to show us what is to be done, since her head gardener has been taken by the draft and her second gardener has left overnight. But she didn't know any too well what was to be done. *We*

showed *her*. Not that she was particularly grateful or interested——"

"Mrs. Jarvis? She's the one they were telling me about up at Doctor Blake's to-day."

"Who was telling you?"

"The gardener, if you must know!"

"Gossiping with the servants! Oh, my eye!" said Mabel. And then: "What did he say about her?"

"Oh, that she was about the most exclusive person roundabout here. Her husband's been abroad almost ever since the war began—1914, I mean. Red Cross or something in Serbia. They weren't very much attached, it seems. The Blakes' gardener said it didn't make much difference where he was for all of her. And there's another man—a military man——"

The voices dwindled. Gail did not hear the rest of the talk. But scandal did not sound pretty, transmitted through the lips of gardeners and farm-erettes. She wondered what they had been accustomed to say about her and Jaspar at Clearfield—the servants, the hangers-on? How had the walks and the talks and the readings seemed?

Then she rebuked herself impatiently for her littleness. Jerry Blair would never wonder what the neighbors' servants were saying or had said about him! What a wonderful, dear, impossible lad he was!

"Estella has had a letter from her husband," some one called out. "She's fainted. He was wounded, and she never had the cable about it. He's coming on all right—only lost an arm. He'll be coming home soon."

"Wha'd she faint about?" inquired Miriam Lowenstein with friendly curiosity, as she industriously chewed gum.

His arm gone! Gail thought of Jerry wounded, maimed, disabled. Curious, she had never before considered the possibilities of actual, physical danger to him. It would be horrible. It would quench that gay confidence of his. But

she had already done that for him. She had taken away from him that precious gift of high-hearted belief in his destiny. But, anyway, he mustn't be wounded. Eternal justice demanded that he should be restored whole to his country after the war, so that he might be again what he had been—for he would, of course, recover from what she had done to him.

"Fifteen years younger than her at that." Mabel had taken up again the tale of Mrs. Spencer Jarvis. "She's forty, and I could see it under her rouge. A boy, the gardener said, in officer's clothes. I should think it would pay her husband to leave them Serbians or Armenians or whatever they are to worry along themselves, and come home and take care of his wife."

Gail had scarcely been aware that she had heard all this, but later she was to remember it.

As October drew near, and the girls began to prepare for their flitting home, she realized, with dismay, first, that she was no nearer a solution of her own problem than she had been in June, and, second, that she did not want to leave Lebanon. She knew, of course, that she never wanted to see Jerry Blair again; she wanted to forget her swift descent into madness, into folly, into dishonor. For it had been dishonor so to have denied the love upon which she had been building her existence. Yet, curiously enough, the edifice which she had been rearing, which she had been teaching herself to believe was her own beautiful and chosen house of life and love—that seemed now almost as impossible as to be Jerry Blair's wife.

The hill country had become sanctuary to her. Outside it, her enemies awaited her—decisions that had to be made, problems that had to be solved, yearnings and sorrows and shames that were mercifully deadened for her here. She wanted to stay in her sanctuary. She understood suddenly what a mercy

a nunnery must have been to thousands of harassed women—a place of refuge from themselves and the domination of their emotions.

And then, by and by, one day the house mother gave her her chance. Mrs. Jarvis wanted a capable woman to manage her farm during the winter. There was comparatively little actual work to do. There would be one man to help—all the others had been drawn into the service. He was a faithful creature, too old for the army and long an employee of the Jarvis family. It was certain that he would not "leave on" the farm manager. Mrs. Jarvis herself meant to stay at Lebanon all the winter, except for brief trips to New York. Would Gail like the job? It would be forty dollars a month and "found."

"You wouldn't be treated like—the help, you know," stated the house mother. "More like a governess or something. You wouldn't eat with the family. Not that there is any family except Mrs. Spencer; the two kids went away to boarding school last week. And he's over there distributing bread to the Turks—no, I guess it ain't the Turks. But you'd have your own quarters—a bedroom and sitting room, and your meals served there. She wanted it understood that it wouldn't be one of those 'make-yourself-one-of-the-family' jobs, even if you were a lady. I said you were the only one of the bunch I thought had head enough for it. You've studied such a lot while the others have been gallivanting to the movies—the simpletons! why, farming for women——"

"I'd love it!" cried Gail, coming to a sudden decision and interrupting her matron's eulogy of the new career opening to women. She need not leave her sanctuary yet. She need not make her decisions. And perhaps another four or five months, six months or a year of absence, from Jasper and the old, busy,



concentrated life would cure her of all desire for it.

Did she want to be cured? Had what she called her love been so ephemeral as that?

She moved up to Mrs. Spencer's the first of October, a glorious day of blue and bronze and gold. Her employer was picking chrysanthemums from a border near the stone-and-timber cottage. Gail had not seen her before, but she recalled all Mabel Manning's chatter about her. She was a small woman, dark, repressed, aristocratic, elegant in attire, with the simple elegance of the aristocrat in the country. She greeted her new farm manager courteously, but coldly, told her at what hours her meals would be served to her and outlined her duties. She rang for the man and introduced him—a winter-apple-cheeked old Irishman—to his new chief.

"I am downstairs every morning at eleven," said Mrs. Jarvis, "and I think that'll be as good a time as any for our going over things together. You'll have to arrange with some of the native farmers about the ice cutting, and about the woodchopping. Perhaps you'll want to take care of the dairy yourself. I don't mean to milk; Bryan is an excellent milker—"

"I am thot, young leddy," interposed Bryan.

Mrs. Jarvis went on with her instructions and suggestions. Then she rang for a maid to show Gail to her quarters.

After the merry, noisy democracy of the Land Army camp life, Gail thought, existence under Mrs. Spencer Jarvis' roof was going to be a little bleak and lonely. What a cold, self-contained woman she seemed! Had she, Gail, been foolish to think that she could stand such a shut-off life for a whole season? She thought of the Lilacs, charming, hospitable, gay, swarming with Bettina's friends, vibrant with interests. Then she looked out through the windows of the room in which she

was standing. The world outside was a pure jewel of beauty and of peace. She would stay in her sanctuary.

## CHAPTER VII.

It was November, a steely morning of dark-blue cloud and dark-blue hills, with sudden gleams of sun irradiating the blue, and the threat of snow on the horizon. The wide stretches of the high country were colored like enamels—with the bronze of oaks that would not shed their leaves, the russet gold of bare fields, the amethystine shadows of scudding clouds cast upon the earth. Gail had been down to the woods, with Bryan, to mark the trees for the winter cutting. The wind had stung a glorious color into her tanned cheeks. Her eyes were brilliant with health and vigor. She had drawn deep breaths of the winy air and once she had broken away from the plodding old man and had run, arms outspread to the wind, a hundred yards or so.

"I can't help it, Bryan!" she had called when he had come up to her. "It's such a glorious day to be alive. It's such an adventure to be alive—"

She had broken off sharply. She, to be talking of adventure!

"Sure it is, miss," Bryan had agreed. "An' there's a many across the water that 'u'd say the same thing."

"I know. I know," Gail had murmured. "It's heartless to love the tingle of life so when—when all that is going on over there."

"Ye've wan dear to you there, miss?"

"No—yes. They're all dear to all of us, aren't they?"

"I've a grandson of me own," Bryan had said, not committing himself on the subject of an all-embracing tenderness for the armies.

When she had come up to the house at eleven o'clock, Hannah, the housemaid, had met her with the intelligence that Mrs. Jarvis wished to see her in her bedroom.



"She's seen bad news in the paper. She hasn't come down, miss," said Hannah.

"Oh, I'm so sorry! Perhaps she'd rather not see me this morning?"

"No, miss. She asked that you come up."

Gail went up the stairs and for the first time paused at the big front door on the second floor and rapped. Mrs. Jarvis' entirely contained voice bade her enter. She was sitting before the fire, with her account books on a stand by her side. She was in negligee, in which Gail had never before seen her. But there was no ravagement of sorrow visible on her dark, self-contained face.

"Good morning, Miss Center. I have not yet gone down, as you see——"

"I was so sorry to learn from Hannah that you had had some bad news."

"Thank you." Mrs. Jarvis closed the topic of her grief briefly, finally. "Did Bryan take you through the wood lot this morning?"

"Yes." Gail's face was hot from the rebuff, but she spoke evenly. The woman was inhuman! They talked on about the farm matters. Gail's eyes roamed about the room, a curious blend of luxury and asceticism. On the dressing table were three pictures. One was of a man of middle age, her husband, doubtless. One was of the two little girls whom Gail had seen driving in a pony cart about the village during the summer. And one—her heart seemed suddenly to stop beating—one was of Jerry Blair. He was in uniform, and his eyes were smiling and his lips were hard held against a smile that wished to play upon them. Gay, expectant, he looked out of the silver frame and challenged all skeptics to deny that life was a glorious adventure. In front of Jerry's picture there was a little glass bowl of some splendidly colored scabiosa. "The mourning bride!" Gail thought to herself. She remembered all that Mabel Manning had said.

She had the sense of having been intolerably cheated. So he, no more than she herself, had been honest in that mad flirtation! He, who had presumed to lecture her—yes, to lecture!—had been deep in an affair with this cold, middle-aged woman. He, who had tormented her for months with his remembered words of love, had rehearsed them with this bloodless person sitting here! He, whose utterances about the glory of life had made her own way of living seem dingy, unclean, her own heart to be dingy and unclean, so that she had been all these days striving to purge it and to regain the power of taking life splendidly, wholesomely, openly—he who had done all this to her had merely been using language!

She knew now, as she sat there, full of anger against the boy who looked out upon this woman's room with the same gladness, the same confidence, with which he had looked down upon her, Gail, at the altar, that it had been he and his talk and the influence of her few days' acquaintance with him that had made her flee Clearfield, her work, Jaspar—that had made her change her life. And all the time—all the time——Oh, it was intolerable! "The sport of groundlings," indeed! Why, her love for Jaspar, Jaspar's love for her, had been beautiful, clean, glorious, compared to Jerry's affair with this woman, old enough to be his mother!

"I think that is all this morning. Unless you have something to report?"

Gail came back from the world that had tumbled so unceremoniously in upon her sanctuary.

"No, nothing—nothing."

She went abruptly from the room. She thought she would go from the house, from the countryside. She was amazed, when, by and by, she could pause for realization of her mood, at the bitterness of her disappointment, her disillusionment, her sense of having been tricked.

She went out into the air again. There was a flurry of snow on a distant hill, though the sun still flashed sword bright on the one next it. She walked rapidly down toward the woods. She was hurt, hurt, unbelievably hurt. She would get out of this foolish tangle into which she had gotten herself. This very day she would tell that inhuman woman back there that she did not wish to keep on with the work. She would go back to Clearfield. She would take up her own life again. At any rate, Jasper made no pretense of being a knight of the Round Table. Jasper was, at least, no hypocrite!

Down in the wood hollows the wind did not blow. Tired, she sat upon a fallen log. She relaxed the tense muscles of her body. She breathed deeply of the aromatic air. She sat very still, preoccupied with her own emotions. But by and by she became aware that the log had another visitant. At the other end a squirrel sat, bushy tail erect, cheeks distended by a nut. He was watching her out of bright, beadlike eyes. It seemed that the mere moving of her own was enough to disturb and alarm him. He scampered off and made for his hoard of nuts. Gail could not keep from smiling.

With that smile, something cooling, healing, crept into her hot, sore heart, and by and by she began to cry softly, soothingly. When at last she rose, she had had a wonderful revelation.

"Suppose he was not what he seemed, what he pretended?" she said to herself. "Suppose it was—a pose. He may not have been true, but it was—the sort of life he believed in. It doesn't so much matter about him—at any rate, for me. Only for himself. It's a pity if he didn't really get all that fresh, unspoiled joy and adventure from life. But it's there! It's there—joy for the unsullied heart, adventure for the brave, sure spirit! Even if they were not his—poor boy!"

She went slowly up to the house again. It was time for her luncheon. She washed her hands and face and sat down to the simple little meal upon the table in her sitting room. The morning paper lay beside her plate. She read the war news in headlines. She turned the page. There was the lengthening list of casualties. In the columns next were the individual records of American soldiers who had paid the final price for freedom or who had won distinction with their wounds.

"Major Blair," she read, "seriously wounded——"

She read on, dully, dazedly. At first the words did not pierce clear through to her intelligence. But by and by she understood. Three weeks ago he had been badly wounded in an attack. Three weeks ago, and she had had no knowledge of it, no intuition of it! By this time, he might be dead. By this time, he might have gone on to the final adventure.

A sob burst suddenly from her. Then they tore at her throat. And then, suddenly, she ceased to cry and her eyes dried.

This, of course, had been the bad news of the woman downstairs, the woman who sat with tight-drawn lips and brooding eyes in the room with Jerry's picture and the flowers before it. Suppose she, Gail, were to go down now, and were to say that she, too, had had bad news—that her husband, Major Blair, had been wounded! What a wonderful moment! How all that pretense of perfect self-control would give way! How that air of invincible preparation for all the world's surprises would dissolve!

Only she was probably not his wife any longer. What a fool she had been to run away from him and from everything sane and sensible before they had arranged the dissolution of their foolish marriage! And, anyway, why did she wish to take revenge upon that poor

creature downstairs? *She* had probably loved Jerry. Her heart might be broken now. The passion of a woman like that, deep, reserved, disappointed in life, middle-aged—that would be a devastating thing. How sorry for her that Jerry whom Gail had thought she knew would be—the Jerry who was so boundlessly understanding, so limitlessly sympathetic, as well as so incurably gay!

No, she would say nothing, do nothing. By and by she would go back to Clearfield. And if Jaspar would forgive this vagary of hers, they would take up life where she had dropped it. They would renew the companionship at which, she knew, Clearfield had begun to look askance. She told herself again that she could bear the sidelong glances of her neighbors as long as she knew in her own heart that she wronged no one.

Only, there was a curious lack of zest about it all now. Jaspar and all their relation seemed as remote as some prehistoric epoch. She tried to conjure up his looks, his voice, to reanimate in herself all the feelings—happy, sorrowful, passionate—which the thought of him had once inspired. But the effort left her cold. Indeed, she could not make it.

The boy's face interposed between her and Jaspar. And it was no longer gay; it was solemn—it was set—it was a dead face.

She wept softly now, and did not strive to stay her tears.

## CHAPTER VIII.

It was three weeks later. She had decided to walk to the village to buy some wool. She wanted to tire herself out, and, in these days, that seemed to be an impossibility. She was so well, so well and strong. Life flowed so riotously through her veins. Never had the instinctive desire for fundamental

satisfactions been so strong in her—for her food, for close human companionship, for the feeling of children's hands against her face. And all that strength rose up now to tell her that she could not sleep unless she could make herself dog-tired. She would lie awake longing for the sight of Jerry's face, laughing and happy. She would lie awake longing for the touch of Jaspar's hand upon her arm, and the long, slow fire of his eyes burning into hers. She must make herself weary.

She had bought her yarn and had come out of the village store in the twilight. The lights shone from the window behind her, illuminating her. A man stopped her advance.

"Gail!" cried Jaspar's voice. "Gail!"

She looked. He was there. The same—unchanged, slight, weary looking, with the almost dapper air. But there were deep lines about his mouth, about his eyes.

She stammered: "Why—what are you doing— Why, where—"

"I came to see you. Shall we walk along together? The yokels seem interested in our meeting. And if you want to know how I found you— Ah, Gail, Gail, how could you treat me so? I found you through Green. It took my intelligence several-months to think of applying to him for assistance in the matter. Don't look frightened. I didn't tell him the circumstances of your disappearance—merely that I had lost sight of you for some time, and did he happen to know where you could be found? He told me that he had filled out a blank in regard to your race, color, and previous conditions of servitude for the Woman's Land Army last June—and your astute Uncle Sherlock did the rest. Gail, say you are glad to see me! Say that you feel as I do! I feel as if I had come alive after death and burial! Years and years are rolling off me!"

She could not meet his joy with any

corresponding joy. She did not know what had happened to her. She shrank away from the touch of his hand—with it upon her arm, he was pressing close to her side. And yet, a few minutes ago she had thought that she desired to feel again that remembered pressure.

He felt the withdrawal. He dropped her arm.

"What is it, Gail? Did you—did you go on to the consummation of that idiotic marriage? Have you forgotten that you and I belong to each other in deeper ways than the ways of the flesh? Where is that boy who came marauding after you?"

"I don't know. In France. Wounded. But—but I never saw him again after that night. I never saw him. I never heard from him. I—I ran away."

Jaspar laughed aloud in sudden relief and triumph.

"Thank God, whatever gods may be, for that!" he cried. "Oh, you dear and darling girl! If you knew the torments I have suffered! But I deserved them, Gail, I deserved them. It was an outrageous thing to subject you to two years of such morbid feeling—beautiful and noble as it was, too, my dear! It was outrageous to subject you to it! No wonder that at last something snapped in you, and you went off your head as you did when you went through that farcical marriage with that young fire eater of an officer. But it's all past, Gail. You're coming to me as you should come—you're going to marry me!"

"Where," asked Gail distinctly, "is Bettina?"

"We haven't been living together since you left Clearfield. I followed you the next morning. Bettina and I had it out the night you married."

"And haven't you ever gone back?" asked Gail.

It did not seem to her that she was asking the questions herself. For, really, she was not deeply interested in

the answers. He seemed a little embarrassed.

"Well, yes and no. I have gone back to the college—back to the house. But she hasn't been there when I've been. And she has consented to a divorce—conditionally. She says, in that brutally frank way of hers, that she herself doesn't want one—that she has never found marriage with me an obstacle to anything she wanted to do. But she will obtain one, decently and quietly—if I can tell her that you will marry me afterward. It sounds ugly when you put it that way, I know, Gail. But we have to wade through a bit of miry bogland before we can win out to our heights. You do love me, don't you?"

There were on the country road now. The trees were folding in upon them. There were lights beginning to shine in scattered farmhouse windows. Away to the west, a dull band of color smoldered low in the sky.

"Oh, Jaspar, I am so sorry!" cried Gail. "I am so sorry! If you hadn't come, I should never have known it—never have known that I don't love you, I mean. For, oh, I'm afraid I don't! I'm sure I don't!"

His vanity was stung.

"Ah!" he said, with insolent airiness. "I was very dull. I didn't realize that you, too, were capable of being a light-o'-love."

"Jaspar!"

"I put it vulgarly, a bit, perhaps. Crudely. More crudely than the facts warrant, you think. But, in Heaven's name, what else are you? You give yourself, mind and heart and soul, if not body, to me—and then you give yourself to some one else. And you tell me that it was all a mistake, that you really didn't know what you were about, that you didn't mean what you seemed to mean— Oh, Gail!"

At the end of his tirade, he broke down. Gail touched him pitifully on

the arm. But all that she could say was:

"Jaspar, my dear, I'm so sorry! I'm so very sorry!"

They stood still for a minute in the deepening evening.

"There's no sense in my going on with you if you really mean this," he said at last, stopping.

"I do mean it. I'm sorry." She repeated the formula pathetically.

"Bettina wins!" he said shortly. "And she and I will go on living our lie together, loathing and despising each other! And she'll have a new whip with which to sting me—I couldn't keep you!"

"I think, Jaspar," said Gail suddenly, "that maybe that is the reason why—why I've changed. Since I came out of the middle of life there in Clearfield, I've been able to see it. I never could before. And—Jaspar—you are the kind of man who can go on living a lie, living with some one you loathe and despise. You can do that, since there isn't any immediate reward for your giving it up and living openly and honestly. I think perhaps that is why—But it's contemptible of me to try to find reasons for changing, outside myself! They are in me, I suppose—not in you."

"I had you and I couldn't hold you," he said. And then: "Good-by. I shall live as I have told you—in hell the rest of my days. When I thought heaven so near!"

"Well, you had heaven once—since you call it so—and you did not try to keep it. Oh, I'm not reproaching you! I'm only trying to understand myself."

He turned and left her. She stood still watching him until the dusk swallowed his neat, swift-moving figure. Two years of fullness of joy and of pain, of growth and misery—and this was the end of them! She sighed, but she walked on with a springing step.

## CHAPTER IX.

There was an appearance of light and brightness about the Jarvis place when she came up to it. Windows glittered; the hall door stood wide open, and a broad band of light fell on the graveled drive before it. Mrs. Jarvis had been living very quietly all the autumn, since the summer colony had departed, and especially quietly for the past three weeks. This looked almost like a dinner party. There was a big limousine in front of the door. Well, perhaps Mrs. Jarvis might be giving a dinner party, Gail told herself. She was not consulted about household management.

She walked briskly up the drive. A wonderful buoyancy filled her. It was not that she had rid her life of Jaspar—she was sorry for him; she hated it that she had hurt him—but she had rid her life of a false relation, of an untrue emotion. Her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground.

She came into the broad hall. There were people standing in it, and one man sitting. Mrs. Jarvis, with a face alight, excited, stood beside a tall, middle-aged man in the uniform of an English Red Cross worker. It was the man of the photograph on her dressing table, her husband. Gail remembered that she had heard he had entered the British relief work in Serbia long before America had gone into the war.

"Oh, Miss Center, I want you to meet my husband——"

But Gail was looking at the man sitting wearily in one of the big hall chairs. Her face blanched.

"Jerry!" she cried involuntarily.

He opened his weary, heavy eyes and stared at her.

"It's another of those damned dreams," he said, speaking with infinite weariness and slowness. "Another of those damned dreams."

"Why, do you know my brother?" cried Mrs. Jarvis.

"Your brother!" cried Gail. "Oh, that Manning girl!"

"Well, my half brother. But we've never thought about the half. And what has any Manning girl to do with it?"

"Is he—is he—very badly hurt?" she asked Mr. Jarvis, with frightened eyes.

"The wounds have healed very well, but he was gassed as well as splintered up with shrapnel, and he doesn't seem to come up out of the shock. You *do* know him, then?"

Gail did not answer. She crossed the hall and knelt down beside Jerry. She took his hands in hers.

"Jerry, Jerry!" she called. "Have you forgotten me? Have you forgotten Gail? And the wonderful white night when we slid down from the heights into the city?"

He looked down upon her kindly, but a little remotely.

"You're being very sweet to me," he said languidly. "But you mustn't be, you know. I'm rather badly shocked, but I'm not so far gone that I'm going to take any pity from you. That wasn't what I wanted of you, you know——"

"If some one would only kindly explain!" cried Mrs. Jarvis.

"In a minute," said Gail. "In a minute. I want to talk to him first. Listen

to me, Jerry! You brought me out of the most dismal sort of a fever—you brought me into real, wholesome, happy life again. And I'm going to do the same thing for you—if you'll let me. Not because I pity you, my dear, but because I love you. Oh, you were right when you said it was the deep, instinctive voice of nature, and that I simply didn't recognize it! But I do now, I do now! And I'm so proud and glad and so happy, my dear! And life is a glorious adventure! We're going to make it together. And I think you'd better tell your sister all about us."

"They said in the hospital," Mr. Jarvis was repeating with deep satisfaction, "that if anything could ever arouse his interest again, he would come all right. It was the spirit, the mind, that had been shocked and needed healing. Well—I don't know what it all means, but I feel very sure he's been successfully aroused."

"To think," cried Jerry, in a voice beginning to grow strong and gay again, "that, for a few black, blank weeks, I began to doubt that life was the most wonderful adventure—that I stopped believing in miracles!"

He stooped and, with a sudden strength, gathered his wife into his arms.



## ON THE ROAD

TO-DAY we walk, and walking is our goal.  
To-day we climb, and do not note the way.  
And hill and sky their gorgeous scenes unroll,  
To blot the littleness of yesterday.

Our feet trudge bravely up the mountain road,  
Which ever speeds before and beckons on;  
And all our troubles are a melting load,  
And all our baffling little cares are gone.

Here only are the two lit walls of green,  
The road above, the opening sky above;  
And in unresting onward march are seen  
Two lovers, climbing hand in hand with Love.

CLEMENT WOOD.



# Shall Girls Propose?

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "How Many Can One Love at Once?"

**In this little story Miss Middleton opens for discussion an interesting question. What is your opinion?**

SHE belonged to that modern school of speech which disdains reticences and characterizes all modesties as "false" and all reserves as affectations. The taboo, she considered, was responsible for most of the trouble in the world. If there were no topics regarded as undiscussible, no closed doors, no curtains, the human race would proceed much more healthily, like plants in the sunshine. She steadfastly ignored all mists, dews, rains, alternations of night with day, periods of hidden growth deep in the womb of earth. To hear her analogize, one would have thought all successful vegetation a matter of eighty-five degrees Fahrenheit beneath a July sun. And that with her gardener friends making cheesecloth screens for their lettuces.

However, she was consistent. She would take the company into her confidence in regard to her own experiences, would reveal her emotions and her intellectual processes to any one who would listen. Consequently, when one asked her how she felt, one was likely to learn in detail. And when one inquired as to what was the matter, one was pretty sure to be informed.

She was looking rather gloomy the other day, and some one inadvertently asked her what was the trouble. She replied succinctly and to the point.

"Ernest Johnson has just turned me down," she said, "and I'm feeling a little sore about it."

Naturally, there was a gasp on the part of her auditors. Something like

a smile of satisfaction began to indent her lips. She is not often able to cause a gasp of astonishment in these days of candor, and she likes it when she does.

"I suppose you're all shocked to have me mention such a humiliation," she went on, kindling.

"We don't even know what you mean," faltered an old-fashioned woman who always elaborately maintained the fiction that men proposed upon their knees—figuratively, anyway.

"We're shocked at nothing but Ernest's bad taste," said one who prided herself on her tact.

"What on earth is it all about?" cried a third, who had been so deep in a Kitchener toe as to have lost the drift of the conversation, but who had triumphantly emerged from the struggle and was prepared once more to take an intelligent interest in mere revolutions in custom.

"It means," stated the victim of Ernest, "that I did exactly what I believe in doing, that Ernest did exactly what he believed in doing, and that I'm telling you about it."

"But what is it you believe in doing?" cried the old-fashioned woman, shuddering in anticipation.

"I believe in a woman's proposing to a man if she wants to marry him."

"Oh, my dear!" expostulated the old-fashioned woman. "Never, *never* let a man know that he can have you for the asking!"

"And in a man's declining the honor if he feels like doing it," went on the



experimenter coolly, deaf to the interpolation. "And I don't suppose I've been hurt a bit worse than any man who has been rejected by a woman when he thought he had had encouragement to offer himself to her as a husband. If I feel cut up about it, and I admit I do, I'm cut up as a rejected suitor and not as a pioneer." It was quite evident that rejection was losing its sting for her as she was allowed to analyze it and to discourse upon it.

"You haven't been hurt as anything," declared the old-fashioned woman, with conviction, "or you couldn't talk about it."

"That," said the revolutionary one calmly, "is all poppycock, as you'd realize if you'd take a moment for thought before you repeat all the false old formulas you have ever heard. Think of half the luncheons and tea parties you used to attend in the days when we had luncheons and tea parties. What did the women love most to talk about? Why, the things that had hurt them physically! It has always taken a complete Stoic to resist telling all about her operations and the illnesses that led up to them. Women always discuss the symptoms of their sicknesses. Not talk about what hurts one, indeed! It's the favorite topic of conversation in every circle! It's only part of our silly affectation of ultra-refinement to pretend that anything else interests us as much as the things that have already hurt us or that may hurt us at any minute!"

"You seem to assume that conversation is to be solely about what interests the speaker," said the Kitchener-toe girl mildly, "instead of what will interest the auditors. You must admit that one's misfortunes have very little charm for other people—except when they are the misfortunes of the pioneer," she added politely. "Those, of course, are like blazed trees along the trail—they show one where to turn aside."

"Yes," cried the tactful woman, "do

let us get back to you and Ernest. I'm simply dying to hear all about it."

"Well," said the candid damsel obligingly, "I am perfectly willing to talk about it. I think it's rather interesting, myself. Ernest and I have known each other for four or five years. For at least three, he's been pretty constant in his attentions, to use the old-fashioned phraseology—that is, he's been around anywhere from two to five times a week—call it three, on an average. He's taken me to the theater a lot, and we've gone Dutch a good deal. He's sent me flowers and books, and has borrowed books from me and forgotten to return them. We've gone off for day's picnics together, and cooked our chops over fires built on stones by the sea—"

Here the perfectly candid girl's voice threatened for a second to break, but she held it steady and went on, after the slightest of pauses:

"All that sort of thing, you know. We've fought about some things and agreed about others. And one of the things about which we were in the most perfect accord was that the initiative in proposing marriage should be taken by the woman—"

"It always has been," murmured the old-fashioned woman in a discreetly subdued voice, but the narrator did not hear.

"The reasons are perfectly obvious," she said. "In marriage it is the woman who makes the big sacrifices, gives the big gifts. She gives herself, she gives her body, she gives far more of her soul and her personality than the man does. He simply takes another thing from life, adds another rôle to those that he is already playing. He's a husband and a father, but he doesn't cease to be a 'doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief.' He takes on a home, but he doesn't give up an office. He has children, but he doesn't have to take care of them. He's the head of a family, but he isn't the slave of a family. If his emotions

choose to wander occasionally from their own fireside, nobody thinks much the worse of him on that account. Even his wife overlooks it. But the woman who has affairs after she is married is disgraced.

"When one really calculates what a woman who marries gives up as compared to what a man who marries gives up, I think it is truly astounding that any man ever has the colossal nerve to ask a woman to marry him! Imagine any other such bargain! Imagine any salesman on earth offering such terms in any transaction! Imagine a capitalist saying to a laborer:

"Come along, my friend, work for me for the remainder of your days, forego all other chances to sell your labor, forego all your freedom, and limit all your possibilities of growth, and in return I'll give you that workman's cottage there at the edge of the mill yard for life."

"You can picture what would happen to that capitalist. Well, but it's some such opportunity that is offered a woman in marriage, and Ernest and I have always agreed that the least that justice could do was to see that the woman instituted the proceedings."

"Did you and Ernest," inquired the girl of the Kitchener too bluntly, "make love? Did he hold your hand in the moonlight, and kiss your cheek in the firelight, and tell you that he loved you?"

The girl who had proposed to Ernest grew pretty red, but she was loyal to her convictions. She believed in frankness, and she was frank.

"I won't deny some love-making," she said curtly.

"Then Ernest was a pig!" declared the old-fashioned woman. "He was trying——"

"Oh, fudge!" interrupted the frank girl. "You all know perfectly well, however you may agree to deny it, that no end of love-making goes on without

the slightest intention of matrimony on either side. If Ernest had proposed to me, I shouldn't, for a minute, have hesitated to turn him down because I had let him kiss me the night last November when he brought me home from the Lorsens' dance, or because I had rumpled his nice, thick hair when I came into the living room behind him in the dusk, or because—lots of things. Why should they be any more binding upon Ernest than upon me? If any one of us, man or woman, were bound by written or unwritten law to marry every one with whom we have philandered a little—well, polyandry as well as polygamy would be in again. It's the truth, and you all know it, however much you may think it is ladylike to deny it."

"My daughters are never going out of my sight until they marry," declared the old-fashioned woman earnestly.

"Then they'll never marry," retorted the victim of Ernest's rejection. "And as for my own particular case—if you think that I, for all my being a pioneer and a radical, would ever have the nerve to ask a man to marry me without having had some proof that he likes me physically, amorously, why, you're mistaken! I may be courageous, but I'm not a complete fool. I proposed to him because I knew that he did—and that I did—and that we were congenial in every other way, too. And I respect Ernest for being true to his convictions and refusing me."

"Why did he do it, though? If—if—all the things you say about your relations are so, and if he isn't merely a plain, pig philanderer?"

"He isn't merely a plain, pig philanderer," she answered hotly. "But he doesn't want to marry me for the reason that I should think would keep hundreds and thousands of girls from accepting their suitors—because life is opening up before him so adventurously. He's thirty-three, you see—in the new draft.

"'Why, good Lord, Louise,' he said to me, 'you're asking me to forego the biggest adventure any man of my generation can have! You're asking me to go to war with a divided heart, with backward-pulling strings, with responsibilities!'"

"He wants to be free to take life as it comes, and 'it is coming in what he sees as the most joyful adventure, the most brilliant crusade. I don't blame him. I understand him. And the fact that he told me the truth in just so many plain words shows that he meant what we have always said about utter honesty between us!"

"I hope," said the old-fashioned woman darkly, "that his high adventure will be counting army beans in Omaha at thirty dollars a month! I hope his brilliant crusade will be currycombing horses in a Southern camp. I hope——"

"If all women could really take a rejection as upstandingly as you have done," mused the girl of the Kitchener toe, interrupting the litany of castigation which the old-fashioned woman was chanting, "it wouldn't matter who did the proposing. Your particular case doesn't prove anything, if you don't mind my saying so, except that people who have trained themselves to face life courageously, who have been educated to stand with their feet firmly upon the earth, are always in control of their fates.

"But I don't think you make out a case for the immediate adoption of proposals by women. Because you see, my dear, in spite of that convincing list of surrenders by the wife which you recited, the truth is that marriage is an economic contract, entered into in an economic world. The man who proposes announces himself—theoretically, at least—as ready to meet that economic

world in behalf of women and of their children. If society were based upon love and freedom and self-development and all those pretty things, then what you say about a woman's sacrifices in marriage might entitle her to make the first move toward it. But society is based on money. You pay for your marriage license and your wedding ring and your honeymoon trip and your lovely bridal apartment and your first dinner party and your luncheon to your bridesmaids and the doctor and nurse for your first baby and your second, third, and fourth—you pay for every one of these things not in social charm, not in artistic gift, not in emotional ardor, but in common coin of the realm.

"And so, unless a woman's parents have thoughtfully left her an income, or she has a profession that nets her one, she can't ask a man to marry her without being conscious that she is asking him to become responsible for her support through life. And that is why, in my opinion, it will be a long time before any women except those with the iron nerve of adventuresses, however different their moral standard, will propose marriage to men."

"A long time!" cried the radical. "When there isn't a job in the whole world that women aren't tackling now, from making gas masks to being United States senators! Nonsense, my dear! The day of the self-supporting woman is here. It's now, this very, present seventh of the month, not to-morrow, not next week or next year. And that is why women are going to propose without a blush or a tremor—or," she added firmly, fixing the old-fashioned woman with a stare, "without all those deceptions and subterfuges by means of which she has been proposing for generations, and for which she ought to be ashamed."



# Odd Things, Women

By Frederick Orin Bartlett

Author of "Triflers," "The Wall Street Girl," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

Just a charming love story, with a hero who "measured up."

BECAUSE Stephen Hartley dallied too long over his tea in the company of pretty Evelyn Bradbury of Beacon Street, Boston, he missed the limited, upon which he had engaged a chair, and faced the alternative of taking the midnight, which he detested, or of wiring Miss Helen Townsend of East Fifty-fourth Street, New York, that, owing to being unavoidably detained, he must forego the pleasure of a morning at golf with her.

Now Miss Townsend was not a young lady to accept meekly any such vague generalization as "unavoidably detained." Since he had no other particular business in life just at present—it was only three days before that he had received his degree of A. B. from Harvard—except to keep his social engagements, she would probably press him for details, which, in every sphere of life, Stephen carefully side-stepped.

He turned over to a porter his dress-suit case, and lighted a cigarette to think out this matter. If he returned to Evelyn, he could take her to the theater and make a very pleasant evening of it, put up at the Touraine, and journey to New York comfortably on the ten o'clock next morning. If he took the midnight, he would sit up in the smoking room until three or four, and reach New York too early for any sane man to be up, and doubtless accumulate a grouch in consequence. That would take all the fun out of meeting Helen.

Since that English lord had turned up with his arm in a sling, after the first battle of Ypres, one had to be in very good form indeed to win from her more than a passing glance.

He had a notion now that her chief motive in desiring to play golf with him was to interest him further in her movement for supplying soldiers at the front with cigarettes. He had already drawn twice upon his father for five hundred dollars for this undertaking. She apparently did not consider that anything. She had hinted that what he really ought to do, for the good of his soul, was to quit smoking himself for a year and give her that money. When he had replied that this would probably necessitate his going into the trenches in order to get some of his own tobacco, she had written him a four-page letter about the exploits of Lord Ravenshaw, who, as he found time from the special mission for his government he was executing, was learning to play golf with one hand.

Stephen had first met Miss Townsend during the last Christmas recess, when she had appeared, like some radiant vision, at the Martin dance. Where she had kept herself during all the preceding years he did not know, except for vague rumors that she had graduated the June before from Bryn Mawr. The Townsends every one knew, of course, but Helen had been kept in the background until, like some celestial visitor, she had made her debut, a per-



fect and perfected symbol of beauty and charm.

He had danced with her that evening as often as possible, and had sought her out at every opportunity the rest of his vacation. The ever-watchful matrons had observed what a handsome couple they made. She almost matched his tall, lean height and his jet-black hair set off the golden blond of hers. Both their faces had the clean, straight lines that are generations in the making. They held their chins well up, with a certain consciousness of being observed, he with a smile and she with a look of haughty indifference.

He would have been content to sit here the rest of the day and watch her.

Hartley had come back at Easter and, after that, they had corresponded, although she had soon found herself the center of so many activities that her letters had become hardly more than perfunctory. He, too, had found his time well occupied. An old ankle sprain had barred him from the Harvard regiment and left him one of the very few men available as leaven for such social events in Boston as still struggled on.

It was a boy with an evening paper

who decided Hartley definitely to take the midnight. The sheet carried on its front page a picture of Lord Ravenshaw. The occasion was the fact that, in returning from the country club in the company of Mrs. and Miss Townsend, the machine had met with an accident and jeopardized the lives of all three, though no one had been injured.

Hartley checked his bags and, though he had several hours on his hands and knew that he would be welcomed back at the Bradburys', did not return there. Instead, he went off and had dinner by himself and sat around in a hotel lobby until the midnight was made up. Then, instead of trying to get some sleep, he sat up in the smoker, and every now and then pulled the crumpled paper from his pocket and took another look at Lord Ravenshaw.

There was no denying the fact that the man was a deuced good-looking fellow. Tall, straight, and soldierlike, he met Hartley's gaze with something like an open challenge. He was the sort of a man who *would* learn to play golf with one hand—providing it was necessary to do so in order to play with Helen. He was of the type, too, who come back to England blinded, but with a smile and ready to fumble through their former tasks cheerfully as best they may. He made Hartley glad that he had honestly tried his best to join the Harvard regiment.

However, there were other things he could have done. There appeared to be some such inquiry in Lord Ravenshaw's eyes. It was enough to make Hartley pause, as he reached for another cigarette, and return the case to his pocket unopened. And then his thoughts swung back to Helen.

He saw her as some rare product of exquisite workmanship. Her wondrous hair was like fine-spun gold; her brows, her nose, her mouth, and her teeth were such as artists try to create out of their imagination; in gentle curves, the per-

fect symmetry was preserved to her feet. Her dress was always but another expression of this same harmony. One was never conscious of her clothes. They were for the time being as much a part of her as her eyes. She always made Stephen very careful of his own costume. It would have been unpardonable of any man to come into her presence otherwise than faultlessly tailored.

Of all the women he had ever admired, she was the only one who had made him pause and wonder if he were worthy of her. For, without an objectionable conceit, Hartley was conscious of his own position. He had been born into the circle whose traditions were one with the history of New York and Boston, and he had never known what it was to find his path barred to anything he wanted. Yet, from the first time he had met Helen, he had felt a weakening of his inbred cool self-confidence. Before her, he retained his poise, but down deep in his heart, he knew that it was not real. Once or twice, when he had been looking straight into her eyes, she had made him fumble for his words.

Hartley went to his home, as soon as he reached New York, and ducked under a cold shower. Then he shaved and dressed with a little more than ordinary care. He was in time for his appointment, but he played a miserable game of golf. Helen, on the other hand, was playing a little better than usual. She offered the gracious explanation that this was because she had been on the links a good deal in the last few weeks.

"With Ravenshaw?" he inquired.

"Yes," she answered. "He does wonderfully, considering his handicap. I want you to meet him, Stephen."

"Thanks. I'd like to," he replied.

"He's in Washington to-day, but to-morrow— Will you be free to-morrow?"



Hartley expected to be free to fulfill her wishes for an indefinite period. He had made up his mind to that last night.

"Yes," he answered.

"Then we will meet at the club at three," she suggested.

"Unless you'll allow me to call for you at the house?"

"That'll be very nice," she consented. "We'll all meet there."

This was at the eighteenth hole. He was glad when they started back for the wide piazza and iced tea, because his game, instead of improving, had been steadily growing worse.

"I read in the paper of your mishap yesterday," he said, as he turned his bag over to a caddy. "It was a lucky escape for you."

"For me?" she answered, as if surprised that she was considered at all. "It didn't matter so much about mother and me, but it would have been very serious indeed if it had prevented Lord Ravenshaw from going to Washington to-day."

"What happened?" he asked.

"No one seems to know," she answered with a frown. "Carl was driving, and something broke."

"Queer!" he commented. "That was Carl who drove us to-day?"

"Yes. He's a very careful driver. He's been with us for five years, and feels dreadfully about it. But it didn't seem to be in the least his fault."

Soon they were on the spacious veranda of the clubhouse, and it was then, for the first time that day, that Lord Ravenshaw vanished completely from Hartley's thoughts. He was conscious only of Her and the blue sky above and the stretch of greensward that sloped off gently to a fringe of trees. It was a dreamy, comfortable picture that fully satisfied him. He would have been content to sit here the rest of the day and watch her. And she allowed him to reminisce a little about last Easter, though at times he had an uncomfort-

able feeling that she was not following him closely. She gave him, on the whole, the impression that last Easter had been a long time ago.

Then, in the midst of it, she glanced at her tiny gold wrist watch and declared that she must leave at once to attend a committee meeting of some sort.

"Can't you phone your excuses?" he asked.

"Why should I do that?" she returned, meeting his eyes point-blank.

It was an awkward moment for him—one of those moments when he faltered for the proper words. He rose instantly.

"If it's the cigarette society, you can count on me for five hundred more," he stammered.

"Thanks," she smiled.

And she let him ride back to town with her. Carl drove them. He thought the lad showed the effect of yesterday's accident in the extreme care he used.

Hartley spent part of the rest of the day at his tailor's and part in the Fifth Avenue stores, replenishing other details of his wardrobe. He felt seriously concerned over the prospect of meeting Ravenshaw. It was as if comparisons were to be made. It was a boyish attitude to take, but he was quite in earnest about desiring to appear at his best. Not that such things would matter much if they were to meet alone, as man to man, but with Helen's critical eyes upon him, the least he could do was to make as favorable an appearance as possible.

When, at half-past two, Hartley stepped from a taxi before the Townsend home, it was with the consciousness of being quite faultless from his head to his feet. He was the more glad of this because at that very moment a tall, clean-cut man, with his arm in a sling, was also stepping from a cab. Their eyes met, and Hartley moved forward with a smile and an extended hand.



He threw himself upon Ravenshaw and shoved him back.

"Lord Ravenshaw?" he said.

The other saluted.

"I believe I'm to have the honor of playing golf with Miss Townsend and you this afternoon. My name is Hartley."

"To be sure," nodded Ravenshaw. "I've heard her speak of you."

So, for a second, the two men stood on the edge of the curb facing each other. At the same moment, Carl, in the big Townsend limousine, came toward them. Had any one been looking, he might have seen the young driver's ruddy face suddenly turn pale, as his hand threw open the throttle and his

eyes became fixed on Ravenshaw in his English uniform. But no one was looking. That was just why this was his opportunity—an opportunity, possibly, for the Iron Cross. The machine leaped forward in response to the gas and charged toward the curb. Hartley turned first, and in a flash saw the danger. Then, quite unconscious of what he was doing except for a lightninglike realization that this man must be saved, he threw himself upon Ravenshaw and shoved him back.

When Hartley recovered consciousness, he was in a strange room. It was

a very quiet, sunshiny room, and a smooth-shaven young man with determined eyes was bending over him.

"Well," said Doctor Bowles with satisfaction, "you've come to at last."

"What's the row?" inquired Hartley.

"We'll go into details later," answered the doctor. "I wouldn't talk much just now."

Hartley tried to move, but he found himself all done up in bandages. Several parts of him hurt like the devil.

It was not until several hours later that Hartley was able to explain to himself just why he was here in the Townsend house. It seems he had a broken arm, a broken rib or two, and numerous minor injuries, which the surgeon vaguely described as contusions and abrasions. These included a cut on his forehead and missing patches of skin from his cheek and nose. Considered from an artistic point of view, he was not a particularly attractive object. And yet, somewhere down inside him, he felt a tremendous sort of deep satisfaction. If he had been asked to describe it, he would have called it a kind of mellow glow. After having been ordered to silence, he had asked the surgeon just one question:

"Ravenshaw got off all right?"

"Thanks to you," Bowles replied.

Hartley did not see where the thanks to him came in. He had done no more than any man would have done—no more than the circumstances called for. He had not been particularly concerned about Ravenshaw for his own sake, though it is doubtful if he would have done any differently if Ravenshaw had been a less decent fellow; but what had given Hartley his power was what Ravenshaw stood for. The man represented the English government and the Allied cause. He was the agent of right and decency as against the cold-blooded treachery of what that little German chauffeur stood for. That was what had given Hartley the strength of ten

men when he had gripped his jaws and shoved.

And there was still more. Somehow Helen was involved. Ravenshaw was her guest and, as such, she was responsible for him. Hartley had taken over that responsibility. Here was something to be glad for. Perhaps the man was even more than her guest. If so—if so, why, then he should be all the gladder.

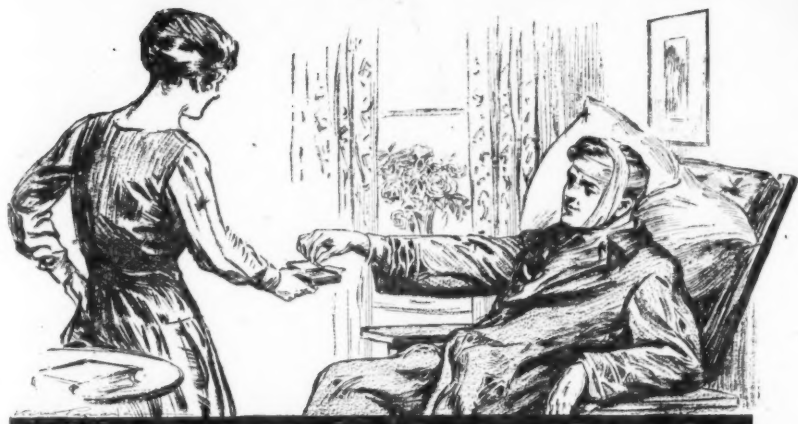
Hartley managed to remain quiet the rest of that day and night, but the next morning he was for getting up. In spite of his aches and sore places, he felt a restless eagerness to be out, but when he began to talk this to the surgeon, the latter merely took his temperature and felt his pulse. It was only after mature deliberation that Bowles allowed Hartley's mother and father to come in, and then he stood guard over them. The pater stood very erect by the bedside, and gripped the boy's hand in silence. And the mother—why, she was just a mother again, as she used to be when she leaned over his crib at night. It was she who read to him, in a shaky voice, a note she had received that morning:

MY DEAR MRS. HARTLEY: I owe my life to the heroic action of your son. But I ask you to believe that I should not feel justified in being grateful for his terrible sacrifice if I were considering myself alone. He has saved the important work of many months, and it is the unofficial thanks of my government I am extending to you and to him, knowing that official appreciation will come later. Most respectfully yours,

RAVENSHAW.

"It was nice of him to write you," murmured Hartley.

The papers made so much fuss over the incident that Mrs. Hartley found herself in the position of private secretary to her son, for she would not allow her own secretary to handle the mass of letters that flooded in. But Hartley himself knew nothing of this. He was waiting as patiently as he could



"I came in to—to bring you these," she explained. "The doctor said you might smoke a little. They—they are from the fund."

for the day to come when Bowles would remove the ugly bandages that swathed his head. Every morning since he had been there, Helen had sent in a fresh vase of flowers and a note. She wanted to see him as soon as he felt able to see any one besides his parents. Yet, day after day, upon one pretext and another, he put off seeing her, even while the desire to see her bit into him. It did not seem fitting that so perfect a being, one so closely akin to the angels, should come into the presence of such a broken-up wreck as he. She blended only with things at their best. One had no more right to allow her to see a cut and battered body than a frayed collar or cravat. It wasn't decent.

So he contented himself with the little notes from her and the fresh flowers she sent in daily—the flowers that represented her. He saw her in the exquisite, fragrant roses she plucked for him, and began to hurry Bowles, because he was so slow in removing the bandages.

"What the deuce is your hurry?" the surgeon broke out tartly. "You can

consider yourself mighty lucky that you're alive."

"That's all right," he retorted, "but as long as I am alive, I don't want to lie here swathed like an Egyptian mummy!"

There was one break in the monotony of waiting that came unexpectedly. He had been sitting up waiting for his mother. When she came in, she was quite breathless.

"Oh, Stephen," she exclaimed, "they're downstairs!"

"Who?" demanded Hartley.

"The British ambassador and Lord Ravenshaw. They have something for you."

"What in thunder have they for me?"

"Can they come up—for just a few minutes?"

"Sure—let 'em come," consented Hartley.

So, preceded by Hartley, senior, they came in. There was a little ceremony, in which Hartley felt that he was a mere onlooker. Ravenshaw gripped his hand in a soldier grip—one soldier meeting another. Then the ambassador came over and, in the name of the

king, pinned upon Hartley's chest a bit of ribbon that stood for distinguished service. It was over in a few minutes, and they had gone, leaving Mrs. Hartley sobbing gently and Hartley, senior, standing with his back to the boy, staring out of the window and finding trouble in cleaning his eye glasses.

Then they, too, went, and Hartley sat alone, the bit of ribbon moving up and down with his quick breathing.

It was so Helen found him when, without permission from any one, she stole in and met his excited eyes.

"Oh, Stephen, I just had to come!"

His cheeks turned scarlet beneath his bandages.

"I—I'm such a messy sort of thing," he apologized.

Swiftly she crossed to his side and bent over him. Then she breathed:

"Your eyes are wonderful!"

She, radiant and of surpassing beauty, said that!

Then something down deep where the glow was asserted itself.

"Helen," he said, "if you don't go soon, I'll say things I oughtn't to say."

She did not move.

"I—I love you," he said.

She stooped and softly kissed the bandages on his forehead. Then he bent back his head, and her lips crept closer to his. And he marveled at what he considered a miracle, not knowing that she, too, was marveling. When she was free again, she held out to him a box bearing an Egyptian monogram.

"I came in to—to bring you these," she explained. "The doctor said you might smoke a little. They—they are from the fund."

## CURTAINS

THERE are curtains at her windows,  
And curtains at her heart;  
Little ruffled, laundered things,  
Stiff and neat and white.  
And they are hanging long and straight,  
With never a fold or part,  
And one may not see past them  
When one goes by at night.  
  
My heart is an unshaded room;  
When there's a party there,  
Out through the bare, wide windowpanes  
My light floods gay!  
Everybody on the street  
Is free to halt and stare,  
And take my party with him  
As he goes on his way.

There are curtains at the windows  
Of her house and heart and eyes,  
Too trim and stiff to flutter  
When a sweet wind stirs.  
Some day soon, soon I, also,  
May be grown-up and wise,  
With curtains at my windows,  
White like hers.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.

# To Pass the Time

By Elizabeth Irons Folsom

Author of "A Corner of His Heart," "A Layer of Good," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL

**Wasn't Camilla a brick? For all her fluffiness,  
didn't she handle the situation in a masterly way?**

WHO is the vanishing fairy in pale blue?"

Camilla, wife of Professor Henry St. Austin Carlton, put a hand on the edge of the study table and lifted herself lightly to a seat there. The swish of her arrival sent a clutter of papers to the floor, the first draft of Professor Henry's new treatise on sociology.

He did not answer; really, Camilla did not annex dignity with years. He stooped and gathered his scattered papers, piled them neatly at the extreme edge of the table, and put a weight on them.

"Who is she?" asked Camilla again.

Again he did not answer. Protracted silence would touch her and indicate her lapse.

But it was hard to make Camilla unhappy. She was swathed in the joy of life. He had seen her first because her laugh had reached him over his books; he had known her first because the sparkle of her presence had invaded his dull rooms; he had loved her first because she embodied things that were not studious, not self-conscious, matters that had not gone with his education, but that were strangely compelling and alluring, as presented by Camilla.

She swayed back and forth on his table corner.

"I didn't hear what you replied," she suggested.

"I didn't reply at all." It was im-

possible to put the desired quantity of ice into the words.

She leaned forward to take his glasses from his nose and brush a kiss on the mark they had left between his eyes.

"Dear love, you answer me at once!" she commanded.

He moved back from her reach.

"I dislike slang, Camilla, as you know."

"Slang? But didn't it describe her? What would you have me say, you dear dealer in words? When you have told me about her, Harry, I'm going to take you with me and show you where you will have your luncheon out of a basket. It's very cool there and sweet smelling. And you'll be surprised at what I have for luncheon. Now who is she?"

"She's Mrs. Huston, who has taken the house at the end of the street."

"Oh, of course. I might have guessed it. She's the new arrival who has a kimono stiff with gold embroidery and a maid to brush her hair! I've heard those things already about her. What did she want of you?"

"She wants something to occupy her time during the summer—some course of reading—some study. She was at my lecture last night and thought perhaps I might be able to suggest something along the lines touched upon there. So she came to see me."

Camilla drew a line with her forefinger from his forehead to his chin.





"Who is the vanishing fairy in pale blue?" asked Camilla, lifting herself lightly to a seat on the edge of the study table.

"Had she noticed how extremely good looking you are?" she murmured.

"You're trying to flatter me into a good humor!"

"Were you in a bad one? Come now! I have a basket full of—guess!—chicken-salad sandwiches—just for you and me!"

"You're very sweet, Camilla," said Professor Henry.

"I shall write that down: 'June 31, Harry says I am very sweet.' I'll read it over on your impossible days."

"Do I have them, Camilla?"

"Yes. But that's why you are you. No, don't kiss me in front of the window."

It was, as she had said, cool and green in the nook beyond the dusty road, over the sunny pasture, down the

slope that shut away the decorated gables and ornate spires of the suburb where Professor Henry could be close to the university. They went arm in arm, and he dropped with a satisfied groan on the spot of deepest shade, where sun shadows tumbled and where the turf was soft. It was very comfortable, and Camilla was a grateful picture, sitting near clasping her knees with her slim brown hands.

But Professor Henry sighed. It was not meet to take satisfaction in such material things, with life so full of serious needs. He knitted his brows and sighed again. Off beyond the hill, there were shadows against the sky line, the hint of coming storm, to serve as a reminder that the world was not all comforts and Camillas.

"What a thought—that the world is full of people who need and who cannot have this comfort!"

"Is that any reason why we shouldn't enjoy it when we can have it?"

"I don't know whether it is. That's one of the things that troubles me—has one a right to have what he wants when there is such pressing need?"

"But suppose every one avoided happiness because it was not evenly distributed. It would be a gay world, wouldn't it? And right now, too, dear love, we should see every happy thing. We're not helping the boys over there by hating our luncheon, and those boys are the big things now—bigger than any opinions—or speculations; bigger than—er—sociology, Harry."

Professor Henry frowned.

"I know. But as I can't be there with them, my own work has some right to my thoughts. We were speaking of comforts. I should find my satisfaction in mental growth. I shouldn't need material things. In my work, in poetry, in art, in the matters that would develop me mentally, is where my happiness should be."

Camilla covered an under-breath

word with a soft, clear whistle, one of her, in her husband's mind, doubtful accomplishments.

He looked at her sharply.

"You know I'm sincere. Didn't I give up my plan for the convention at Duluth because I was afraid I would get more joy out of the trip than out of the proceedings of the convention?"

"You did. And that was very silly of you."

"Didn't I think, too, that it was too selfish for me to go and not take you?"

"You did. And that was very sweet of you. I suppose there's no use going into that argument again."

"None. My mind is quite made up."

Then Professor Henry went to sleep, with Camilla's sweater for a pillow. He slept long, while her fingers flashed through her gray yarn. The shadows were long on the grass when he awoke.

"You've let me waste the entire afternoon," he accused. "After supper, I'm going over to leave some books with Mrs. Huston."

"If her mind needs to be occupied," suggested Camilla, "we can occupy it for her at the Red Cross, seven mornings, seven afternoons, and seven evenings a week."

"I spoke of that to her. But she isn't strong enough for the work, she says. I'll not be long to-night."

But he was rather long. He found her wide veranda pleasant. She came forward to meet him and offered a hand that glittered. A lot of filmy stuff trailed about her feet and slipped from a shoulder. It seemed more suitable to the professor when a maid brought a scarf and wrapped it about her.

The new acquaintance had shining dark hair, parted a bit on one side and sweeping over the tops of her ears. She looked younger in the early dusk. She spoke softly, and he noted the strangeness of her eyes—her way of almost closing them as she talked.

"I hope I shan't find it too lonely

here," she said. "I envy you, who have some one in your house to read with."

"We don't read together," said Professor Henry. "I will be glad to place my library at your disposal."

He knew he was lingering longer than he had expected. He heard the clock strike down the street. He knew he was leaning forward talking earnestly, and he knew he must look rather well as he did it. Her eyes seemed to say so, too. He knew that he sat well, and, as he ran his fingers through his hair, he was conscious that it fell not unbecomingly. He had seen himself do that. It was necessary that a public speaker should know how he looked as he spoke.

He thought her remarkably apt. She picked up and followed along two or three lines of thought into which he casually dropped. He watched her curiously. She had seen much—she had had many experiences; he could hardly judge whether they were wise and pleasant ones, but they had left imprints that made her interesting. Yes, surely she was interesting. Good looking, too, in an odd way, a faint odor of roses about her.

"I think you should be out of doors more," he said paternally. "You need the sunshine."

"I'll remember what you say. Perhaps you're to train my body as well as my mind—and soul?"

She said the last word with a rising inflection. She used that inflection often, and it was pretty.

When he rose to go, she went with him to the corner of the veranda, and an electric light from the street struck full on her queer eyes, the droop of her slight neck, its whiteness in the folds of her scarf. He took her hand.

"There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire flames noondays kindle,"

he quoted. Then he was sorry he had said it. He had not meant it senti-

mentally; just to follow along their talk of Browning, but he saw her color rise.

Then he went away feeling not as satisfied with himself as he had expected. That was a silly thing to quote to a strange woman, alone, on a summer evening. He hoped he had not given a wrong impression. He had meant only to be intelligent, not sentimental.

Camilla ran down the walk to meet him.

"I quite hate you!" she said. "And as for Mrs. Huston, I think I shall go down and murder her! Did you have a good time?"

He snuggled her arm in his.

"I was long," he said contritely. "It was mean to leave you alone. She's a queer person." He raised his hand and ran his fingers through his hair. "She needs a little help. She's alone, I fancy. She needs a little guidance."

"And are you going to guide her, you funny Harry?" And Camilla laughed against his arm.

"Funny?" he repeated stiffly. "Why?"

"You wouldn't know if I told you, you dear," said Camilla.

Professor Henry had plenty of chances to guide Mrs. Huston during the next weeks. She seemed sadly in need of guidance—in literature, in outdoor air, in many things that he could furnish. At his weekly lectures, she sat close below him with her eyes never leaving his face. Often, after a particularly strong gesture, an especially forceful dropping of an arm, the professor would seek her gaze and see that she had noticed. At first that was it—just that she had noticed. Later, he felt that she admired and appreciated as well. In his most eloquent phrasing, he always looked with far-seeing gaze at the southwest gable, his favorite long-distance aim, and when he dropped his eyes for her approval, it was always there.

"You were wonderful to-night," she



"I have come to you," she said.

told him once, and under her admiration, the professor sometimes put more thought into how he was going to speak than he did into what he was going to speak.

Camilla asked her to supper one night, and he walked home with her. At the gate, her hand clung to his.

"Come in," she said.

"No. Camilla is alone. I must go back. You were pale to-night. Take care of yourself."

She clutched his hand with both hers and put her face down upon it. Her fingers were burning. Then her front door opened, and a woman came out. She dropped his hand suddenly and ran up the steps. He turned away.

Professor Henry St. Austin Carlton was disturbed. He walked slowly home, wondering. He realized that he was good looking, young, eloquent. He hoped that she was not really seriously attracted, but he resolved that he would

see her less often and that there should be less of romance in what they talked about.

He had some work to do in his study, after Camilla had gone upstairs that night. He must neglect his weekly lecture no longer. But first he took a look in the mirror. He saw a serious, tall young man. He dropped his lids over his eyes, looked again, swept his hair off his forehead, sighed deeply, and turned from the satisfying reflection.

Over his head, Camilla's high-heeled shoes were pattering about. He smiled affectionately at the sound; then he set to work and forgot himself.

Suddenly a click against the glass of a French window startled him. The shade was nearly down, but he crossed the room and raised it. Against the glass, Mrs. Huston had pressed her cheek.

"Let me in," she signaled.

He loosened the bolt, and she stepped over the sill, closed the two panels, dropped the shade, and turned to him.

"I have come to you," she said.

Horrified surprise tingled its way the length of the professor's spine. She threw off her long cloak, her throat gleamed, her eyes shone, her cheeks were scarlet, so were her lips. He sought his proper demeanor.

"Is anything the matter? Are you in trouble? Shall I call my wife?"

She reached out one hand and spoke softly and rapidly, the words tumbling over each other.

"You know what you said to me that first night. The very first night, you spoke those beautiful words—and we have never talked of it since. It was wonderful of you not to say them again! I understood why you did not. You waited for me to show you that I understood. Let me say them to you:

"There are flashes struck from midnights,  
— There are fire flames noondays kindle.

I have waited for you to go on with

the poem. You did not, and I know why—because you were too great—too good! So I had to come to you."

The professor was speechless. The hour—the place—Camilla—the absurdity— But she spoke again:

"After all, it is my right. You have said so. You taught me how every one has the right to happiness, and when you didn't speak to-night, I knew you were waiting for me."

The professor recoiled.

"There is some mistake— You must let me take you home—you—"

"Harry," came a cheerful voice down the stairs, "are you talking to some one?"

Mrs. Huston said a word under her breath, caught up her coat, and vanished through the door into the hall. He heard the soft thud of the screen as it shut.

Then the professor went up the stairs into Camilla's room and told her what had happened. She sat on the edge of her bed, with her feet tucked under her, and listened wisely.

"Poor thing!" she said. "Mrs. Huston, I mean, Harry."

"I haven't meant a thing, Camilla."

"Of course you haven't. You only wanted to be admired. Of course you didn't mean anything. I wonder how much she meant."

"She meant a great deal," he said gloomily. "Am I a scoundrel, Camilla? Suppose she really cares about me. She meant what she said."

"Maybe she did. Maybe she takes herself too seriously, too."

"Too!"

"Having told you," mused Camilla, "and you having told me, no harm is yet done."

"Camilla, you're a brick! You haven't said a word to accuse me."

"No. I understand you, love."

The professor was silent a long time. His head was bowed, his attitude ungraceful, but he retained it.



"Dear," he said suddenly, "do you suppose I could go away a while? I'm in a panic about this thing. I've always prided myself on being so straight."

"You are straight."

"Yes, but I can't meet her after tonight. Oh, Camilla, I'm miserably weak! I feel like running."

Something glittered at the corner

of one of Camilla's eyes, and she batted that eye vigorously.

"Sit down here. Let's talk it over," she said.

The result of that talk on the edge of Camilla's bed was that the professor was "to run," as he bitterly put it, and "to go to Duluth, as you should have done anyhow," as Camilla put it.



The trip would keep him away until Mrs. Huston's summer occupancy of the house was over. Camilla pooh-poohed the idea that he was leaving on account of her.

"It's just the trip you planned. You aren't running away from her."

Before he left, at noon the next day, he held her very tightly.

"You little brick! I never appreciated you before, Camilla."

That a poised, serious-minded student should be running away because of a one-sided entanglement stung Professor Henry at the start of his journey. He was tempted more than once to go back, to treat the situation with the calmness that he should know how to use, with the certainty of rectitude. He did not so much mind being propped by Camilla, but he disliked the shamed state of mind that had suggested flight. But when he reached his boat at the Chicago dock, when he saw the water stretching in a glittering sweep out of the harbor, he was comforted.

He did not go down into his state-room until they were well out. It was comfortable, he found. He closed the door as far as the long hook and faced a smiling young man in the glass; he took off his necktie and collar and whistled cheerily. Life was good. He was still fine and strong. He hoped he had not broken her heart. Then, in the glass, he saw fingers lifting the long brass hook. He turned to face the person who slipped in and shut the door. It was Mrs. Huston.

Professor Henry gasped. He backed away and reached for his collar. The situation flamed. Shut in the state-room with her!

She was smiling, and her eyes had the same strange gleam.

"I heard where you were going." She panted a little. "And I had just

time to come, too. It was such a chance to be together that I risked it. A whole week together! Isn't it worth anything it costs?"

He loosened her clasp and flung the door open. Camilla stood on the threshold, and with her a stolid woman he had seen before.

"Your maid is here, Mrs. Huston," said Camilla cheerfully. "She has all your things. It was lucky for us that the boat was late in starting."

The stolid figure barred his last glimpse of her, and Camilla shut the door on their heels.

"That was a close shave," she said. "The maid came running over to tell me that she had gone, and I added two and two after talking with her. She really is hardly quite right. The maid watches her all the time, for she does these things constantly. She's crazy about what she calls 'romance' and always is running after some one. She really doesn't mean anything. She does it to pass the time."

"To pass the time——" repeated Professor Henry blankly.

"Yes. You needn't have worried for fear she was in love with you. She does it all the time. But I think she really isn't quite right in her head."

"That's why she thought she was in love with me, I suppose." It was the last gasp of much complacency. His face grew slowly red.

Camilla put her lips to his cheek.

"Then I'm not quite right, either," she whispered, "for I love you. And now I am on the trip, too. It's expensive, but we shall love it together. I'll bet she goes back at the first stop."

"Camilla—I've been a plain fool about a lot of things."

And Camilla laughed and patted his cheek, for his voice had not been quite steady.

# The Game and the Candle

By Leigh Gordon Giltner

Author of "The Circle," "Sub Rosa," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

**What a young lieutenant of swift decision and action did to a girl's desperate, unconventional engagement.**

"ODD!" the girl commented. "Certainly the most unique——"

"All of that," conceded the elder woman briskly. "It's a very unusual situation, but then, you see, Judith Duer's by way of being rather an unusual woman. Any other mother would have been utterly crushed when her only son proved a defective. But not Judith! All her life she'd been used to carrying things with a high hand, and she's carried off even this. Sheer force of will, my dear. And she seems able to impress that will upon others."

"She struck me," Kathlyn offered, "as so very gentle!"

"Exactly," smiled Mrs. Storer. "But that gentleness is only on the surface. Judith, while apparently pliant as wax, is adamant. When it became evident that poor Adrian was abnormal, instead of being stunned into atrophy by the shock, she made up her mind to face the thing out, for the child's sake as well as for her own."

"But I don't quite see how."

"Naturally. You wouldn't, Kathlyn. Neither would any one else—except Judith. But in her philosophy it was quite simple. She took the royal attitude, substituting for 'The king can do no wrong,' the more apposite, 'There can be nothing wrong with the king.' She simply accepted her imbecile son as normal and insisted that every one else should do likewise."

"Perhaps she didn't realize——"

"Absurd, my dear!" scoffed the other. "She was the first to guess the truth. But since the boy failed to come up to her standard of what the scion of the houses of Van Vleck and Duer should be, she made her standards conform to circumstances. Her friends, pitying her misfortune and admiring her pluck, supported her heartily; her sycophants, of course, followed suit; even her enemies—Judith Duer is a social autocrat, you know—took their cue from her and played up."

"And the boy himself?" Kathlyn wondered.

"His mother, when the alienists offered her no encouragement, employed expert tutors who succeeded in teaching him, much as an animal trainer teaches a dog or a horse, a few fundamental things."

"For instance?"

"For one thing, they trained him not to gibber in public, to answer semi-intelligibly when spoken to, and to control his twitching muscles as far as humanly possible. He makes a pretense of reading the papers, and I think he's learned to sign the checks he contributes to the various charities."

"But his appearance?" Kathlyn queried. "Defectives usually look the part."

"Adrian does, rather," Mrs. Storer admitted. "His expression is absolutely blank, and his eyes are those of a dead fish. But his valet sees that he is always

perfectly dressed and immaculately groomed, his 'secretary' is always at hand to act as buffer, and his mother has somehow acquired a wonderful power over him. When she 'fixes him with her glittering eye,' he instantly

straightens, his head ceases to wobble, and his hands grow still. I don't know how she manages it—certainly she idolizes him—but he's as obedient to her glance as an animal to its trainer's whip."

"I suppose," hazarded Kathlyn, "she keeps him in seclusion?"

"Not at all—quite the contrary. He has his box at the opera, is an inveterate first nighter—his mother or his secretary always being close by to keep him from lolling his head or playing on the atmosphere with his nervous hands—attends—briefly, fortunately—all the social functions of his mother's set, has a pew in St. Mark's, and all the rest of it. He's supposed to have artistic and musical leanings, and his mother actually retails as Adrian's her own clever *mots*!"

"Isn't it rather—er—awful?"

"Yes, rather, Kathlyn. But we all of us, friends and enemies alike, support the pretense. And Judith carries off the situation with superb aplomb. No one is allowed to question by so much as a glance. Actually, she talks of his marriage as a possibility and even hints delicately at his amours!"

"How ghastly!" Kathlyn's horror was genuine.



"Promise me, Kathlyn," Mrs. van Tuyl had cried excitedly, "that you won't try this business-career nonsense until I'm gone!"

"Adrian's mental weakness isn't hereditary," Mrs. Storer explained, "but the result of a prenatal fright. Still, he's not exactly an eligible *parti* or an ornament to society. I'm telling you all this because we're supposed to see a good deal of them, now that they're back from the West. Judith and I are close friends, and I'm always properly impressed—as you must be—when she mentions Adrian's brilliant bridge game or his interest in the revolutionary theories of Matisse."

Kathlyn shrank a little as she listened, but her eyes brooded. She was a strikingly handsome girl, though her face showed a trifle worn and pinched from the prolonged grind of genteel poverty.

She and her semi-invalid mother had been left with a mere pittance at the death of the husband and father. Since then, they had lived on their traditions—and very little else. The mother, unable to forget that she was a Schuyler by birth and a Van Tuyl by marriage, had positively refused to allow Kathlyn to "demean" herself by finding work to do. So they had schemed and struggled and starved to keep up appearances. Kathlyn, at times, had known the actual pinch of hunger, to say nothing of the galling humiliation of constantly trying to placate impatient creditors and importunate tradesmen. Mrs. van Tuyl had serenely left all this to Kathlyn, felicitating herself meanwhile upon the fact that they had maintained their social position, despite the odds against them.

But the pride that balked at allowing Kathlyn to earn a livelihood had not deterred Mrs. van Tuyl, as conditions and her own health grew worse, from dispatching a delicately worded appeal to her sister upstate, who had promptly offered her a home, and to a lifelong friend in New York, who had responded with a tactful note to Kathlyn:

I'm a lonely old woman, my dear. [Mrs.

Ogden Storer was less than forty-five.] I've no one in the world but my nephew—

"Kathlyn," Mrs. van Tuyl had interrupted rapturously, "perhaps this nephew—"

—who is in France. [Kathlyn had suppressed a smile at her mother's discomfiture.] But, despite my years and infirmities, I'm breathlessly busy with war work of all kinds, as well as with various boards and chairmanships and all that sort of thing, and you could be a wonderful help to me, if you'd spend the winter with me. I shall try not to ask too much of you, and I shall do all in my power to make life pleasant for you while you are my guest. Your mother's daughter will be very welcome in my home. Sincerely yours, MIRIAM STORER.

But Kathlyn had failed to enthuse. Her struggle with conditions had made her something skeptical of human disinterestedness.

"I'd much rather qualify for a business position, mother," she had said. "In Mrs. Storer's home, I'll be virtually a dependent—"

"Not at all, Kathlyn," her mother had hastened to assure her. "Miriam expects you to help her with her correspondence—which I'm sure you won't mind—but she'll introduce you to her friends, not as her secretary, but her guest."

"I don't think it wise to mix business and social relations," Kathlyn had objected. "I'd feel happier and more independent if you'd let me learn stenography and do office work for some one I don't know."

"Dear, you mustn't!" Mrs. van Tuyl had fairly shrieked. "Think how we've fought to retain our social status—and then to lose it at a stroke! I think I'd die if you went in for stenography! Say you won't, dear! Promise me, Kathlyn!"

"Please don't ask me to promise, mother. It's hardly fair."

"Don't you see," the mother had broken in eagerly, "that Miriam means to give you a chance to establish your—"

self? It's your opportunity, my dear, and you mustn't miss it. You're a handsome girl, Kathlyn, if you weren't so pinched—you *will* worry, you know—and there's no reason why, with Miriam's backing, you shouldn't make a brilliant marriage. Your family name, your accomplishments——"

"I'm afraid those things don't count for much, mother," the girl had said wearily. "I realize I've gone off in my appearance. I've had no time to massage and beauty sleep and make the best of myself. Then I haven't the money for pretty clothes and——"

"Miriam will see to that," the mother had persisted. "Part of your—er—allowance is to be an account at Miriam's own modiste's. She's very generous, Kathlyn, and I don't see why you aren't amenable——"

"Mother," Kathlyn had said abruptly, "I'll promise you this: I won't take any steps toward a business career until I've tried out your plan—and failed, as I probably shall. If some amiable gentleman chooses to play Cophetua to my beggar maid, very well. But if I remain an unclaimed blessing when the season ends, why, then——"

"Promise me, Kathlyn," Mrs. van Tuyl had cried excitedly, "that you won't try this business-career nonsense until I'm gone! Perhaps it won't be long—I seem to be failing very fast. There'll be ample time to turn to stenography when you've proved a social failure. And I'm sure you'll be a success. But in any case, Kathlyn, I want your word that, as long as I'm alive, you won't humiliate me by becoming a working girl. Promise, dear!"

Which, after days of nagging, Kathlyn had reluctantly done.

Life with Mrs. Storer proved pleasantly different from the harassed existence Kathlyn had known for years. Her benefactress lived alone, except for her retinue of servants, in a big, beau-

tiful house, which, in its charm and distinction, admirably expressed her. Her sole near relative, Lieutenant Ingram of the American air service, was overseas. His portraits, which smiled at the beholder from every possible nook, vitalized the empty house. One—the latest—taken in his aviator's uniform, stood on Mrs. Storer's desk, and Kathlyn, as she wrote, liked to fancy that she read in the handsome young face a new seriousness and strength of purpose. More than once, when Mrs. Storer was indisposed or busy with her various boards and committees, it devolved upon Kathlyn to write to him. The duty proved a pleasure, as, indeed, did all that Mrs. Storer required of her—which was sufficiently little. Kathlyn realized that even that little was designed to save her pride.

Mrs. Storer was all that was thoughtful and kind. She introduced Kathlyn into her own innermost circle and presented all the eligible men of her acquaintance. But though all these showed her the usual small courtesies, though certain of them kept her supplied with bonbons and flowers, she scored not a single offer of marriage. As the season wore on, she began to feel like a defeated candidate. Her sensitiveness read into Mrs. Storer's manner a shade of disappointment, and her mother's nagging letters exaggerated her discomfiture.

She didn't see, was the burden of them all, why Kathlyn didn't take advantage of the chance Mrs. Storer was giving her. Other girls, no more attractive, made brilliant matches. Why not Kathlyn? Especially since her poor, invalid mother was so unhappily circumstanced. She felt herself an exile and an alien. Sister Alice didn't understand her; that cold country house was making her cough worse, and she was sure her lungs were affected; she was bored and lonely and unhappy. Couldn't Kathlyn manage a marriage

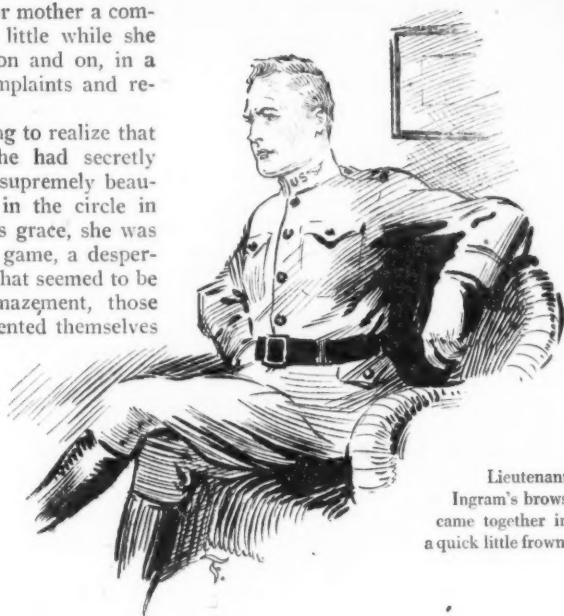
that would give her poor mother a comfortable home for the little while she had to live? And so on and on, in a ceaseless stream of complaints and reproaches.

Kathlyn was beginning to realize that marriage, of which she had secretly dreamed as something supremely beautiful and sacred was, in the circle in which, by Mrs. Storer's grace, she was moving, a sort of mad game, a desperate struggle for prizes that seemed to be few. And to her amazement, those who missed these contented themselves

with what they could win. A delightfully pretty young thing, whom Kathlyn had genuinely liked, announced her engagement to a multimillionaire twice her own age; and another charming girl married a palpably self-made man, who possessed no visible attractions, because he was fast becoming a power in national politics. There were others, more fortunate, who were becoming the brides of splendid, soldierly young chaps—youths like Anthony Ingram—of whom they were pardonably proud. While she—

Was it any wonder that Kathlyn felt herself growing a little bitter? She realized that she was, in a sort, a failure socially, and she raged that she should feel humbled and apologetic, as if it were some fault of hers. She had been offered in the marriage mart, and there had been no bidders. Life had broken faith with her; her dreams had ended in empty husks; the future held scant promise—*unless she wrested from Fate what Fate refused to bestow*. She brooded, ending by feeling herself a sort of feminine Ishmael.

Her standards and ideals had been exceptionally high, but, in the mad



Lieutenant  
Ingram's brows  
came together in  
a quick little frown.

struggle for success and supremacy that raged around her, she found them superfluous. She began to throw her scruples "over the edge," as a balloonist throws out ballast.

"The lighter for climbing!" she would say with a bitter smile.

And just then, as it chanced, Mrs. Drexel Duer and her semi-imbecile son returned from a sojourn in southern California.

"What's this Kathlyn?" Mrs. Storer's hand was shaking so that the paper it held rustled like leaves in the wind. "It's unspeakable, unbelievable! Of course it's a dreadful mistake—some ghastly joke, perhaps—"

Kathlyn stood before her benefactress as a prisoner stands before his judge. Her face was quite white, except where a vivid spot of high, bright color burned on either cheek.



"There's no mistake," she said steadily. "And if it's a joke, I'm not sure whether it's on Adrian—or me."

Mrs. Storer, her own face pale, gazed at the girl incredulously.

"You mean——" she managed to get out.

"I mean," said Kathlyn, still quite steadily, "that I personally gave that announcement to the papers."

Mrs. Storer gasped.

"Kathlyn, are you insane? What—why——"

"You've no idea," the girl said quietly, "what my life has been. And I'm not going to tell you in detail. But you can judge from—from this how desperate I am."

"But—as bad as this, Kathlyn?" Mrs. Storer said gently. "I've tried to make you happy——"

"You've been heavenly kind, dear Mrs. Storer." The girl's steady voice broke a little. "But—don't you see?—I'm just a dependent on your charity. No, don't protest! I know perfectly well that the few letters I write for you don't pay for my shoes and gloves—to say nothing of the rest. And mother is unhappy with my aunt. She writes that her health is failing and that I must provide a home for her. And so——"

"And so you've announced your engagement to a driveling idiot? Don't you realize the position in which you've placed yourself? Can't you fancy what people will think? Kathlyn, Kathlyn, I'm sorry! Why didn't you come to me? Surely I could have found some better solution than this!"

"I don't know," Kathlyn said dully. "It's a pretty desperate expedient, but then I'm pretty desperate myself. I've disposed of all my scruples as so much excess baggage. I think I remember that you've praised me more than once for my 'kindness' to poor, unfortunate Adrian, when it was—can you imagine anything more base?—a deliberate play

to lend plausibility to this announcement. I've made capital of the fact that the poor creature can't deny or contest my claim."

"But what of the mother?" Mrs. Storer pertinently suggested.

"That's the point! This puts her in a position where she'll be forced either to admit that her idolized Adrian is an incompetent, or to accept me as his fiancée."

Mrs. Storer looked at her in a sort of terrified admiration.

"Clever!" she applauded with irony. "But surely you're not going through with it?"

Kathlyn nodded.

"I'm prepared to go to any limit," she stated.

"It seems unbelievable," Mrs. Storer said slowly, "that a girl of your birth and breeding should descend to this. Why, Kathlyn, it's a particularly despicable species of blackmail!"

"I know," the girl said calmly, "I've stamped myself a common adventuress. But, as I said before, I'm desperate. I'm sick of poverty and dependence and nagging. I want freedom——"

"And you think," Mrs. Storer spoke quietly, "that you'll find it as the wife of a repulsive imbecile?"

Kathlyn's face went paler still.

"Why not?" she queried, with a certain forced hardihood. "Adrian is quite inoffensive; he never speaks unless he is spoken to, and he hasn't intelligence enough to object to any arrangement I may make. His secretary and valet will have charge of him, and I'll only have to be patient with him and keep up the ghastly pretense—always supposing, of course, that Mrs. Duer doesn't denounce me for the conscious fraud I am."

"Do you know," Mrs. Storer said thoughtfully, "it's my opinion that Judith will sanction the engagement? I think she'll even be glad to. It will seem proof positive of Adrian's nor-

mality; and, in case of her death, she'll feel there's some one obligated to look after the poor boy and go on with the grisly farce. Kathlyn, I'm sorry—sorrrier than I can say—that you acted without consulting me. For—I think I may well tell you now—I had hoped that you and Tony——”

“Tony!”

The word had the intensity of a cry. Kathlyn's glance went arrow swift to the framed picture of young Lieutenant Anthony Ingram of the U. S. F. C., which stood, as usual, on Mrs. Storer's desk. Tony, over whose gay, game letters she had laughed and cried; Tony, the insouciant, the daring; Tony, her heart's hero, her dream come true!

She became presently aware that Mrs. Storer was speaking.

“I hadn't told you,” she was saying, “because I was keeping it as a surprise. Tony is to be invalidated home. That last smash was a bad one, and it may be months before he's quite fit again. I didn't want to prejudice you against each other by telling you, but it was my hope that you——”

“You mean,” Kathlyn asked dazedly, “that you would have allowed your nephew to marry me—a dependent on your charity?”

“I mean that I should have been glad to see the girl whose worth I thought I knew my nephew's wife. But——”

“I know,” said Kathlyn miserably. “I've forfeited—all that. And there's nothing for me but to go through, if Mrs. Duer will permit it. Perhaps she won't. But the result will be the same. Every one will realize that I've taken advantage of poor Adrian's imbecility—— Well——she laughed mirthlessly——“it seems my only chance. I somehow don't attract men. I question if your nephew would have given me a second glance if I'd met him——”

“You'll meet him soon,” Mrs. Storer warned. “He's sailed already. And I'm sure you would have been friends—

perhaps something more. If only this hadn't happened! Oh, Kathlyn, why did you do it?”

“Desolation and desperation,” Kathlyn answered. “They're responsible for a good many marriages, I fancy.”

The telephone on Mrs. Storer's desk rang. Kathlyn laughed gratingly.

“Doubtless my eager fiancé!” she said. “His eager impatience cannot wait.” Or perhaps my mother-in-law elect, eager to welcome me into the family.”

She took up the receiver, pale, but braced for any shock—except, perhaps, that which she received. For over the wire came, clear, distinct, and honey-sweet, the voice of Mrs. Drexel Duer.

“My dear!” it said cordially. “I'm delighted beyond words! Why didn't you tell me? But I suppose you blessed children wanted to keep your tender secret to yourselves a little while. Selfish dears! I'm very happy in the news, Kathlyn, and I'm coming over at once to see my future daughter. Adrian sends much love.”

Kathlyn, white and limp, sank back in her chair. She had somehow managed a reply of sorts, but she was trembling like a wind-blown leaf. But in an instant she had pulled herself together; she even managed a twisted smile.

“My prophetic soul! Mrs. Duer is coming over at once. She says she's delighted. Congratulations, please.”

Then suddenly the tension snapped. She burst into a wild storm of tears.

“My word!” Lieutenant Ingram stared in horror and amaze at his aunt. “You don't mean it? It can't be it's this stunning girl who's engaged to Adrian Duer! I heard the fellows talking of it at the club, but they didn't mention the name, and I didn't dream that——”

“I haven't told you,” Mrs. Storer interposed, “because I wanted you to know her first. The fact in itself is

Why didn't you stop it? What on earth possessed the girl?"

"Sheer desperation, I think."

"She must have been desperate indeed to take on Adrian! As I recall him, he wasn't a pretty sight. Why, Aunt Miriam, he was a gibbering idiot!"

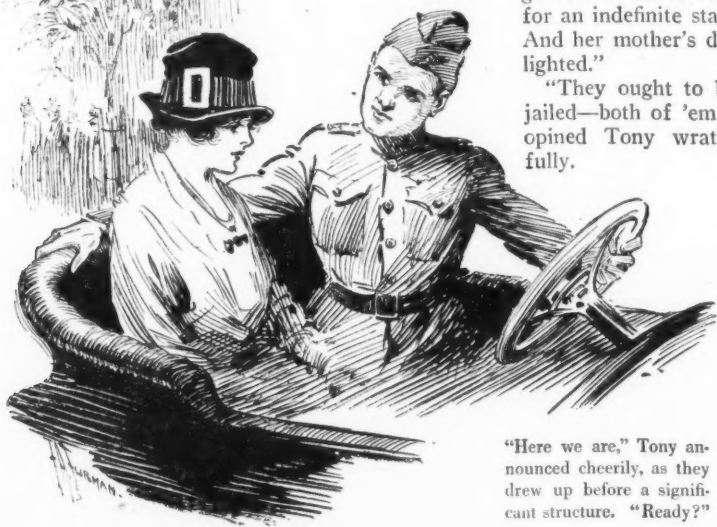
"They've trained him not to gibber," Mrs. Storer submitted, with a wry smile.

"And that wonderful girl! What's she thinking of to spoil her life like this? Isn't there anybody to stop her?"

Mrs. Storer shook her head.

"I'm afraid not, Tony. I've tried—and failed. His mother sanctions the engagement. She's asked Kathlyn to go to her to-morrow for an indefinite stay. And her mother's delighted."

"They ought to be jailed—both of 'em!" opined Tony wrathfully.



"Here we are," Tony announced cheerily, as they drew up before a significant structure. "Ready?"

prejudicial, but I hoped that, when you knew Kathlyn and all the circumstances, you'd understand. I wanted you to like her, Tony!"

"I did," he hastened to say. "I do—in spite of this rotten engagement thing. But as for understanding—that's past me! How on earth did it come about?"

"In fact," Mrs. Storer pursued thoughtfully, "I think Kathlyn's mother is the immediate cause of it all. She's one of those gentle souls who nag till they get what they want. She's obsessed with the idea of preserving her social status and living up to her traditions, and a little thing like Kathlyn's

happiness doesn't figure in her calculations at all. I shall always believe that she nagged the poor girl into this. They're poverty poor, you know."

Lieutenant Ingram's brows came together in a quick little frown.

"Don't think too ill of her, Tony," Mrs. Storer begged. "You can't know what pressure may have been brought to bear upon her."

"That's why I don't condemn her. I'm giving her the benefit of the doubt. I've done so many things myself that weren't exactly grade I that I'm not in a position to sit in judgment on others."

"Then you don't quite despise her?"

"I think I pity her as much as I— Think what a reckless thing she's done! I'll admit it was pretty raw, but it serves to show the degree of her desperation. But she mustn't be allowed to go through with it. I've pretended, as we've all done, for his mother's sake, that I regarded Adrian as normal. As a matter of fact, we are all perfectly well aware that he's a mental defective. It's wicked, criminal, this marriage thing! The law ought to take a hand."

"I hardly think that likely, dear."

"Then I will! Aunt Miriam, don't you realize the awfulness of it? Why, it's unspeakable, infamous, damnable—I beg your pardon, but this thing's jarred me pretty badly. It's the limit!"

"Then," suggested Mrs. Storer, watching him keenly as she spoke, "why not put an end to it?"

"I mean to," he said definitely.

And Mrs. Storer drew a long breath of relief. Tony was always efficient!

That Lieutenant Anthony Ingram was a man of swift decision and action the number of Boche planes for which he had accounted attested; even in that final terrific flight that had come so near being his last it had been his quickness of wit and presence of mind, when his battered "ship" did a deadly nose dive,

which had saved him and his observer from a particularly grisly death. As it was, the accident had put him out of the fight for months to come. Hence his presence in New York.

He had learned much since he had entered the service. The typical idle, wealthy young man about town, he had gone in for aviation as a sport; and even before his country had entered the war, had contemplated crossing the border to join the Royal Flying Corps. He had entered the war game as a rare bit of sport, and, to his credit be it said, had taken whatever came in a sportsmanlike spirit.

He had also acquired a new viewpoint. To the man who spends hours each day hovering on the outer rim of things in a vast, cold void high above the clouds, only the big values of life come to count. The immensity of the world in which he lived minimized the Liliputian world below. Hourly at grips with death, life lost for him its pettiness, its artificialities, its castes and conventions. Back to the elemental swung this product of generations of wealth and luxury and surface polish. Tony Ingram had left New York a bit vainglorious of his high estate; he came back to it as simple, as natural, as sincere as an unschooled child.

So he was able to look with a broader vision than he would once have been capable of at poor Kathlyn's desperate expedient. Her first letter, written during his aunt's slight illness, had intrigued his interest; he had watched eagerly for the next and that which had followed. While on this side, his correspondence had sadly bored him; his secretary had taken care of even his personal mail. But in the unspeakable loneliness he experienced over there, every line from home was fraught with interest, every word read and reread. He had vastly liked Kathlyn's few letters, and was prepared to like her. Strangely enough, she measured up to

the mental picture he had made of her, and his initial interest was quickening into a crescendo of feeling which fairly startled him when the news of her ill-advised engagement threatened a discordant finale.

But Tony's processes were rapid, and he had decided upon a plan of action before he had half smoked his cigar. The question of taste—or the lack of it—involved in Kathlyn's course, the dread of possible publicity and the tongues of men, might have given pause to the Anthony Ingram of a year previous, but not to daring Tony of the air service. His methods in love, as in war, were simple and direct.

When, fifteen minutes later, Kathlyn came down the stair, he was waiting for her at its foot. She smiled at him, but, for the first time, he noted that she looked a bit drawn and that there were purple shadows under her eyes.

"Will you risk a spin with a battered wreck like me?" he asked. "It's quite safe, really. I tried it out yesterday and find I can drive all right, in spite of my bad ankle. I was once a reckless speed fiend, but I've learned not to take chances unless there's something at stake."

Kathlyn smiled.

"I'll be glad to go, if your aunt won't mind."

"She won't. I haven't mentioned it to her, but since I came home, she lets me have whatever I want, and I want this drive with you very much."

"Very well. I'll be ready in five minutes."

And she was.

To this pilot of the unstable air lanes, threading the maze of city traffic was an unconsidered trifle. Yet Tony at the wheel found little to say.

Kathlyn, equally silent, stole covert glances at him now and again. He was so big, so handsome, so altogether fine. Something rose in her throat and choked her.

Suddenly Tony turned and looked down at her.

"I've just heard of your engagement, Miss van Tuyl," he said formally. "May I offer my good wishes?"

The color drained out of Kathlyn's lips and cheeks. For the moment she had almost forgotten the horror—of her own making—which shadowed her spirit like a pall.

"Thank you," she said tonelessly.

"I hope you will be very happy——"

"Happy!" The word came from her lips like a moan. "Happy!"

"Very, very happy—as happy as you deserve."

She laughed harshly.

"You have your wish, lieutenant," she said bitterly. "I'm just as happy as I deserve to be."

There was a brief silence; then she broke out suddenly:

"What's the use of pretending? Surely you know the wretched truth, and—quite naturally—you despise me!"

"Kathlyn," he said very quietly, "look at me!"

Startled, she obeyed. Blue eyes and gray met and held. Kathlyn's heart was beating with great, painful throbs; a great wave of crimson swept across her face and throat; her lashes fell.

"Thanks. That's all," he said.

The girl found herself trembling—perceptibly, she feared—and her lips quivered despite her effort at control. Why had he thus cruelly forced her to self-betrayal? Did conquest, such a conquest, mean so much to him?

"Please," she said, with such dignity and calm as she could command, "if you don't mind, I should like to go home."

"Sorry," he said pleasantly, "but if you don't mind, I've rather an important errand. After that, why, of course——"

He drove on.

Gradually Kathlyn won back to a sort of forced composure. What did it

matter, what did anything matter now? The vortex of the downtown traffic claimed them. Kathlyn, glancing about, found herself on unfamiliar ground.

"Just where are we going?" she asked.

He glanced down at her with a flash of his really wonderful smile.

"Why, it's rather anticipating my climax, but I don't mind telling you."

His smile faded; his handsome, boyish face paled a little.

"There's a 'Little Church Around the Corner,' Kathlyn. We're going there—via the city hall."

She started slightly, but managed a smile.

"Of course. I'm properly rebuked for my curiosity."

"I'm in earnest, Kathlyn." He spoke with a sort of savage tenderness. "You're not going to marry Adrian Duer next month—or ever. You're going to marry me."

It flashed upon her that Mrs. Storer might have appealed to his knightliness in her behalf.

"Charity!" she scorned.

He bent toward her eagerly, his eyes aflame.

"Something more. I love you, Kathlyn!"

"You've known me less than a week," she said dazedly.

"I've known you for whole æons crowded into hours. Not that it matters. Love isn't a matter of the calendar. It's as sudden as a spark. I began to love you with your first letter, Kathlyn. I read and reread it until it was worn thin. And I knew, the moment I saw you, that you were meant for me——"

"But now that you've learned about—about——"

"Does that matter? Does anything matter? I love you, you know. I'm aware this is pretty sudden, Kathlyn. I'd looked forward to the regulation wooing—roses and raptures and the rest of it. But there isn't time. Aunt Miriam tells me you're booked for the Duers to-morrow. That settles it. You don't go back home until you belong to me."

Kathlyn was quite sure that she would wake, in an instant, from this dizzying dream to the grimmest of actualities. She did not speak; she had no words.

"Here we are," Tony announced cheerily, as they drew up before a significant structure she vaguely recognized. "Ready?"

Then suddenly he bent over her with a note in his voice she had not heard before.

"Perhaps I'm not playing fair, girl dear," he said half under his breath. "I don't want to rush you into marrying me—even to save you from something rather worse. If you've any objections to offer, now's your chance. I'm not quite a cave man, Kathlyn. I'll give you"—he glanced at his wrist watch—"say ten minutes. Will ten answer?"

Kathlyn lifted her eyes to his. She was pale, but entirely calm.

"If," she said quietly, but there was a tremulous thrill in her voice to which he reacted exquisitely, "if the gates of heaven were opened to you, with—the other place—as an alternative, do you think you'd take even *five*?"





# A Question of Sport

By Eliza Kent

Author of "Foghorn and Flute," "Sweet Peas," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY O'CARTER

**Not only a question of sport—but of forgiveness. Why does a woman find it so much easier to forgive than a man?**

THE romance of Gale and June was one of those happy affairs where two young people meet one day and immediately forget that the rest of the world exists.

"I could 'a' taken her in my arms an' kissed her five minutes after we was introduced, an' she wouldn't have said a word," Gale confided to Lizzie, tweaking her mane by way of emphasis.

And good authority has it that June confided to her mirror that night that "All he could do was to stare into my face with his heart in his eyes. Indeed, everybody noticed it."

And she was quite right—everybody had noticed it. The third day after that, they were engaged.

Gale never wasted time talking about June's beauty—he took that as a matter of course, just as one accepts the loveliness of a lily—but, as man hath done since the time of Adam, he greatly marveled to find his ladylove saint-in-chief in the kingdom of goodness and twin sister to the angels. And if there was one thing Gale adored above all else, it was a good woman.

"I always have believed it rested with woman an' not with the preachers to swing this old world of ours alongside of heaven," he told Lizzie. "Why, women can do anythin' with us men they want to—they can make us good, or they can make us bad; they can sink us down to the bottom o' perdition, or they can tie us to the apron strings of the stars."

Now, Gale never meant this as a shift of responsibility—not by any means. He meant it for what it really was—a most signal honor to the weaker sex; and what more delightful paradox can be imagined than that of the weak being stronger than the strong? It fascinated Gale, and he rolled the thought over the lyre strings of his mind as one rolleth a sweet morsel beneath the tongue. And all was well.

But, as every one knows, the course of true love never runs smooth for any great length of time, and in spite of the weak being stronger than the strong, one day the gray Past put forth her bony fingers and gripped the rosy Present. You see, Gale had come face to face with a stranger in town that morning, and a flash of recognition had flamed for an instant in the old man's eyes. An hour later, he saw the stranger and June in an earnest conversation that bespoke old friendship, and the rosy hues of the Present faded into the gray tarnish of the Past.

As the hours of the afternoon dragged on, Gale's thoughts turned toward the long road that led southwest. Yet, before he faced that trail, he must see June once more. While he was considering the advisability of sending her a note, he saw her dash out to her pony and, with the grace of a young sapling bending to the breeze, throw herself across the saddle and take the road to old Nancy's shack, five miles south.



"June, darling," he cried, dashing up like a belated knight, "I've come back to ask you to forgive me again and to tell you that I forgive you....."

"Lord," thought Gale, "when a man crawls under the fence of respectability an' into the heart of a girl like June, the fear of being kicked back is worse than a dose of pizen!"

Two miles out, he suddenly pushed forward and overtook her.

"June," he said, in the sad minor tones of a martyr, "I seen Preacher Hall talkin' to you this afternoon, an' I

guessed by the look in your eye he'd squealed on me. I'm not afraid of him turnin' me over, but it strikes me you probably will—you're so honest yourself. An' I ain't goin' to blame you. A good woman's a good woman, an' that's all there is to that. But I want to tell you my side of it, June."

"Yes?" said the girl evenly, and Gale twisted uneasily in his saddle, for who can fathom femininity when it speaks in that half-pleasant, half-icy tone?

"You see," he said, dejectedly falling into the middle of his subject, "I missed womenfolks all around an' had to rough it. I run away when I was fourteen an', after herdin' sheep an' doin' odd jobs like that, I come across California Bill over in Arizona. I was nineteen then, an' I run with his gang three months. We rushed cattle an' even held up a coach or two. It was the mistake of my life! Then Old Man Hall comes along into Ocoya, preachin', an' we rode him up one night an' I seen a yellow-livered Mexican as belonged to the gang tryin' to steal Hall's kid. I left him under a clump of chaparral. It was my first an' only killin'—honest to God it was—an' I had to wing him to save the girl."

"Ah!" said June softly. "And so there was a woman in it?"

"Oh, no," replied Gale patiently. "She wasn't a woman—she was only a kid about fifteen. But that didn't matter to Mexican Sam. In fifteen minutes after he'd thrown the girl across his saddle, I gave her back to the old man. The preacher talked to me a little—an' I quit the game an' swore never to do another dishonest act 's long as I lived. An' I never have. But I've gotta keep away from the law. I'd sooner eat gunpowder any day than to go into one o' them prison hells. I—I guess I can't expect you to forgive me, can I, June?"

He had not intended to say this, but hope, you know, springs eternal in the masculine breast. However, as his

pretty sweetheart continued to gaze into his face with such a strange expression, hope began to flicker and die away, like a candle spent. Then, at the end of thirty seconds or so, her eyelids drooped prettily, her lips puckered pathetically, the dimples in her cheeks narrowed, broadened, then narrowed again, as if uncertain as to what was expected of them. And Gale, being a mere man, stood looking at her, thoroughly mystified, not knowing whether to fold her in his arms or to mount Lizzie and wend his sorrowful way into the desert. And then a bewitching look came into the girl's big round eyes, and the ruby tints of the sunset stained her cheeks.

"Oh, Gale," she said, with a little tremor in her voice, "of course I'll forgive you! No, Hall didn't tell me. He was telling me about losing his wife, and I was telling him about our engagement. And he never said a word about you. You see, I've known him for ages. He's going on to Sweetwater to-night, and I'm sure he wouldn't tell a soul. Oh, Gale dear, of course I'll forgive you! And why shouldn't I? You see, Gale, once—once I fell from grace, too. I was in a big city working in a store, and—and I couldn't stand the pretty laces and things. A girl likes pretty things so! Oh, Gale, I never meant to tell you in the world, but now that you have confided in me, I know you'll forgive me!"

When the world misses a beat in its rhythm, the quake thereof is mighty. But Gale felt that something infinitely mightier than a quake had happened; the wires of creation themselves had become crossed. When at last he found his mental equilibrium, plus his voice, he grabbed June by the arm.

"A thief!" he cried. "A thief! An' me thinkin' all the time you was as good as the angels! Why, it don't make no difference how much I loved a woman, if she wasn't good, I'd eat my heart out shred by shred before I'd marry

her! That's how much I believe in a good woman! She's got to be the makin' of me." He swallowed hard several times and started all over again. "A thief! An' me thinkin' all the time you was good as the angels! An' was stealin' laces all you done? Was that all the big city done for you?"

And then, as was entirely proper for a man who honors a good woman above rare pearls, he cast her from him.

"Why, Gale," she cried, "I forgave you! You rushed cattle, you say, and even held up some coaches. Yet I forgave you!"

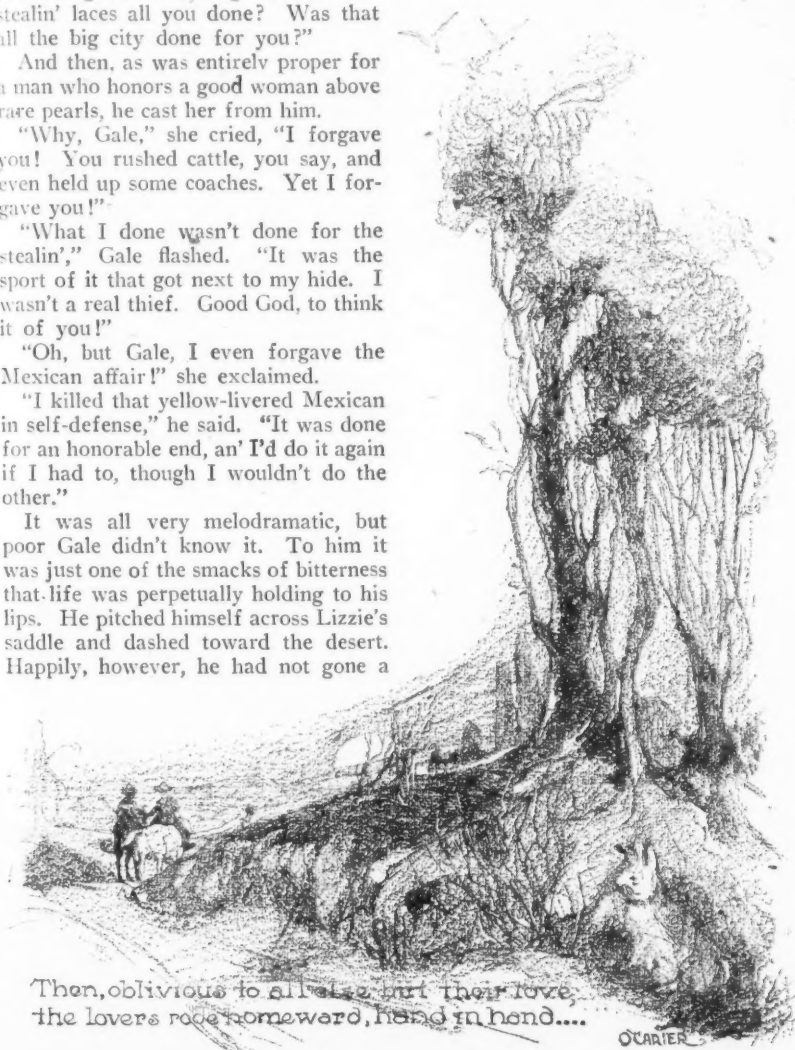
"What I done wasn't done for the stealin'," Gale flashed. "It was the sport of it that got next to my hide. I wasn't a real thief. Good God, to think it of you!"

"Oh, but Gale, I even forgave the Mexican affair!" she exclaimed.

"I killed that yellow-livered Mexican in self-defense," he said. "It was done for an honorable end, an' I'd do it again if I had to, though I wouldn't do the other."

It was all very melodramatic, but poor Gale didn't know it. To him it was just one of the smacks of bitterness that life was perpetually holding to his lips. He pitched himself across Lizzie's saddle and dashed toward the desert. Happily, however, he had not gone a

quarter of a mile before he suddenly stopped. Like the calm that comes over the world after a great storm was the bewildered look that crept into his eyes. Then the bitterness slipped from his



Then, oblivious to all else but their love,  
the lovers rode homeward, hand in hand....

OCARIER

heart as drops slip from a heavy cloud, and his soul laughed aloud in glee. He saw it all now, clear as the noonday sun. June—dear, sweet, good little June, the model for all womanhood—was ready to forgive him, but she must first see if he would do as much for her.

"Well, well, well, the dum little sinner!" he cried. "The dum little sinner! She was but testing my love, Lizzie, an', manlike, I didn't have gumption enough to see it! Why, she's as innocent as a newborn babe, an' I'm a dum fool!"

He turned back again, and when he curved Dennie's Bend, he saw June before him, riding slowly homeward in the amber twilight.

"June darling," he cried, dashing up like a belated knight, "I've come back to ask you to forgive me again an' to tell you that I forgive you—an' I don't care how much ribbon an' lace stuck to your pretty fingers. An' I promise you neither king's horses nor king's men can ever make me leave the straight an' narrow path again. As you love me an' forgave me, so do I love you an' forgive you."

June, true to her sex, forgave him instantly.

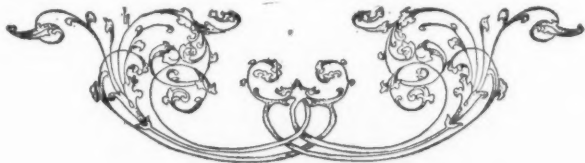
"I was terribly unhappy," she sighed,

"but I was riding slowly, for I knew, if you loved me as I love you, you'd come back."

Lizzie flicked an ear impatiently, and June nestled up against his broad, broad shoulder, purring like a kitten. And Gale, caressing her pretty hair with his lips, winked solemnly at the big yellow moon that was peeping over the eastern hills, for the moon, of course, was on to the joke. Then, oblivious to all else but their love, the lovers rode homeward, hand in hand, a thousand times happier, they both declared, than they had been before, proving again that sweet are the uses of adversities.

And so they were married. After the ceremony, Uncle Josiah cornered Gale out on the veranda.

"Son," he whispered, "I-raised June, an' I júst wanna put a bug in your ear, before you start for Galveston. June's a fine girl—she's got a heart big as a whale—but she's got a weak spot, son, an' you gotta watch her. You see, she has a likin' for them pretty things that belongs to women—trinkets an' laces an' things—an' she come near bein' pinched over in Galveston once fer shopliftin'. She don't do it jest to be stealin', yer know. *It's th' sport of it that gits next to her hide.*"



### AND EVER SINCE!

WHEN Great-grandpapa Adam was called down for eating  
That red apple which curious Eve has bestowed,  
And straightway arose that historic, hot meeting  
With a dispossession notice, as might be supposed,  
Did dear grandpa 'fess up and make reply proudly:

"I ate it. I'm guilty. Don't blame Eve, the poor lamb!"  
Well, not so you'd notice! "The core!" cried he loudly.

"I but nibbled the core, Lord! *Cherchez la femme!*"

MARIEL BRADY.





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# NEW YORK STAGE SUCCESSSES

## Three Wise Fools

By Austin Strong

A comedy of three bachelors who were startled out of a "rut."

Another of the unassuming but extraordinarily popular entertainments of the theater with which Messrs. Winchell Smith and John L. Golden are delighting the American public. "Turn to the Right," "Lightnin'," and now—"Three Wise Fools."



Smith and Golden, Producers

IT all happens in a charming old house on Washington Square—a house with an atmosphere of culture and well-ordered simplicity, as distinguished in its way as each of the three old bachelors whose home it is. Theodore Findley is the senior member of the banking firm of Findley & Co, Doctor Richard Gaunt a brain specialist and member of the Rockefeller Institute, and James Trumbull a judge of distinction. A peculiar friendship between the three has existed from young manhood, when they were all in love with the same wonderful girl—who married none of them! For many years, they have lived together, faithful to her memory and to each other, in the same monotonous rut, each eating his apple and drinking his glass of hot water promptly at 10:30 every night before going to bed. The whole household, including the servants, moves like a piece of perfect machinery.

To Doctor Gaunt, admiringly reading one of his own articles in a medical journal—an article he has called "The Unburied Dead, or the Psycho-Analysis of Mental Grooves"—comes suddenly the realization that he and his two friends are precisely the sort

of people he has been writing about. He turns to Findley, who is deliberately occupied with his evening game of solitaire, and, slipping up behind him, quietly steals the glass spoon which the correct butler has brought in on the usual medicine tray for Findley. At exactly 8:45, Findley pours out his dose and reaches for the spoon.

FINDLEY (*with a growl*): Umph! What in the name of he—

DOCTOR (*warningly*): Teddy!

FINDLEY: What's come over the servants in this house? That damn' fool Gray has forgotten the spoon! The spoon! Of all the amazing idiots!

DOCTOR (*calmly producing spoon*): Here's your spoon. I took it—to prove a point in my thesis here on "The Unburied Dead." Teddy, you're one of 'em. Don't you see the awful significance of this spoon? Because it was not in its proper place, the top of your head was in imminent danger of exploding. Teddy, we three are queer. We're deep in grooves—chained by habits—harnessed by custom. We're knee-deep in ruts, while flowered meadows beckon us on every hand! Ruts, Teddy, ruts! Don't you understand what I mean?

FINDLEY: No, and neither do you!

By Permission of the Author and the Producers.

DOCTOR: Listen. You play solitaire after dinner every night, drink your three cups of coffee, and swallow your medicine with a gruesome regularity. You discharge a maid because your bed slippers are not in their accustomed habitat, and growl if johnnycakes do not appear on Wednesday mornings.

FINDLEY: How about yourself this morning, when your eggs were too soft?

DOCTOR: Of course. I'm just as bad as you are. We're both—the judge, too—in the class I have named here "The Unburied Dead." I've merely touched the idea in this article. Now I realize I've stumbled on a great discovery. We need to be galvanized into life—to throw off our chains—climb out of our ruts—and roll among the buttercups!

FINDLEY (*kindly*): "Roll among the buttercups!" Don't you think it's time you went to bed, Dick?

DOCTOR (*shaking his head with a smile*): All we need is inspiration. Something to "stab our spirits wide awake." We need youth—color—danger—excitement—revolution—— Pain will do—or riotous sin!

FINDLEY: Sin! Now for the first time you interest me! What would you suggest?

DOCTOR: I'm rather vague about such matters, but I can imagine something wicked. Champagne from a satin slipper. Something red-headed!

FINDLEY: You flatter yourself. At this point Detective Poole, from police headquarters, calls to inform the astonished gentlemen that their house

is being watched on account of an attempt that is expected upon the life of Judge Trumbull. It seems that "Benny the Duck," alias Benjamin Surratt, a criminal sentenced to twenty years, has escaped, and has threatened to "get" the judge.

POOLE: Benny's a bit cracked. He was always a dangerous customer. He was one of a gang of counterfeiters. Broke out of prison two months ago, taking with him John Crawshaw, the bank embezzler.

FINDLEY: John Crawshaw, the banker, escaped!

DOCTOR: And you say you don't want the judge to know of this?



Findley, with infinite care, pours in the medicine—to the exact mark, while Doctor Gaunt, to prove a point in his thesis, steals the spoon.



DOCTOR GAUNT (to GORDON): That cold piece of human clay who talks to you of the preciousness of time was the greatest time waster. At your age he was an utter failure.

POOLE: No, sir. You remember the last time the judge was attacked was because he objected to personal guards. And so we hope you'll say nothing to Judge Trumbull, and that you won't let your servants know that the house is being watched.

After Poole's departure, Findley resumes his game.

FINDLEY: I don't like it—makes me feel creepy.

DOCTOR: Then Benny the Duck's a godsend. Benny the Duck—you know I begin to like that fellow! He might be hiding in the house this minute.

FINDLEY: What's that?

DOCTOR: He could easily mistake your room for the judge's. Can't you see the headlines in the morning papers, with crosses marked to show where your body was dragged?

FINDLEY: Will you dry up?

A joyous voice in the hall announces Findley's nephew, Gordon, who enters breezily. High-spirited and attractive, devoted to football and polo, Gordon is, in his uncle's eyes, nothing but a

drifter because, although having inherited more money than he can ever spend, he refuses to settle down to work. Between sour grunts of disapproval, Findley tells him that he has that day lost the chance of a fine position because he failed to show up in reply to Findley's wire for him. But Gordon demurs rather heatedly.

GORDON: Look here, uncle. You offered me a six months' vacation if I got my degree.

FINDLEY (*gruffly*): I only made such a foolish offer because I thought you had too much decency to accept it. Do you intend to stay an idler all your life? The trouble with you is you lack discipline—character—backbone!

GORDON: When I get ready to take a job, I'll take it. I won't be shoved!

Doctor Gaunt, however, has complete faith in Gordon, and points out to him that at his age, his uncle was an utter failure.

DOCTOR: No. It was the judge who pulled us both up with his success. It was he who held us together. We were



Gordon (Charles Laette), Judge Trumbull (William Ingersoll), Sidney (Helen Menken), Theodore Findley (Claude Cillingwater), Doctor Gaunt (Harry Davenport)  
 SIDNEY: But the will isn't legal, is it? JUDGE: Have no fear. It's the soundest of all law. It's what makes the world go round.

known as "The Three Musketeers." The judge was Athos—always true, brave, and silent! Your uncle was Porthos—

GORDON: And of course you were Aramis! Gee, I wish I'd known you then!

DOCTOR: I don't know—I'm afraid you wouldn't have understood us. One generation never understands another. And I fear, Gordon, we belonged to a very stupid and sentimental generation.

In an old album the doctor shows Gordon photographs of Rena Fairchild, the strange, lovely creature so greatly beloved by the three friends.

DOCTOR: Some people are born into this world, Gordon, with rare beauty, gentleness, and grace, foredoomed. Fate seems to take a malignant pleasure in breaking them, body and soul, with tragedy. In spite of all we could do, she was seized by the furies and hurled upon the reefs. She loved the judge, and grew fond of us all. And then, one day, she disappeared. God knows where. There was a rumor that she had married—another that she had died. We never knew. We tried to find her. The judge spent a fortune—so did your uncle. She had vanished. Sometimes the world is a very large place.

After an unusually trying day in court, Judge Trumbull comes home tired and sad. "Fifteen years of penal servitude" is the haunting sentence he has been obliged to give to a prisoner brought before him, and he is momen-



JUDGE TRUMBULL (reading slowly): "Athos—Porthos—Aramis—old friends: I am dying. For the sake of the old days, help and forgive in your hearts."

tarily expecting the arrival of the prisoner's wife to plead for her husband. The judge brings with him strange news for Findley and the doctor. That day the following letter has come to him:

Athos—Porthos—Aramis—old friends: I am dying. I blame no one but myself. My husband was in no position to help our child. Fate willed it otherwise, so I turn to you three—the best, most chivalrous men I have ever known—to ask for help. If you will do this for me, I will rest in peace; and if there is a Great Beyond, I will pray for you always. For the sake of the old days, help and forgive in your hearts. Yours in despair,

RENA FAIRCHILD.

Then follows a brief will, bequeathing in equal shares to her three dear friends a beloved child, Sidney Fairchild.

All three are deeply moved, but at once turn to plans for the care of Rena's "infant son."

JUDGE: We don't know where the





SIDNEY: Mother told me you three were the most chivalrous men she'd ever known, because it's in your hearts. She was right. You haven't asked me a question—just taken me on trust! Oh, if you could only know what that meant!

child is—there is no address here—but doubtless we'll get word soon.

DOCTOR: Rena's child—there's no question! We must do everything in the world for him.

FINDLEY: We'll give him everything that money can buy.

The butler, entering to announce the woman whom he infers the judge is expecting, is followed closely by a beautiful young girl, poorly dressed, wistful, and bewildered. It seems to require all her courage to cross the room.

GIRL (*approaching the judge*): Are—are you Judge Trumbull?

JUDGE: Yes. Won't you sit down?

GIRL (*with desperate finality*): I've come to say I—

JUDGE (*gently, but with authority*): I am sorry, madame, but I must tell you right from the start that I can do nothing for you. The sentence has been passed.

GIRL (*with an agonized look from one to the other*): Then it's no use?

JUDGE: Sometimes it's true kindness to be stern. I can do nothing for your husband. He is in the hands of the Federal law.

GIRL (*dazed*): Husband? I have no husband!

JUDGE: What is this? Didn't you come here to plead his cause?

GIRL: No, sir—I—I came about a will. Didn't you receive a will?

JUDGE: Why, yes—Mrs. Fairchild's will.

GIRL (*choking*): Yes, sir. I am Sidney Fairchild.

Gordon joins with enthusiasm in the warm welcome the three friends promptly extend to the girl. Quite overcome, Sidney sinks in a faint.

DOCTOR: Why—she's starving! Brandy and milk, Teddy—quick!

GORDON (*holding her in his arms*): Why, sir—she's beautiful!

Four weeks later the curtain rises upon a household transformed as if by

magic. It is young and gay, the rooms are decked with flowers, and all its occupants have acquired a joyous, spring-like manner absolutely unsuggestive of ruts. It is quite evident that Sidney Fairchild has won the hearts of her three guardians. She has been with them one month, and, in honor of her "luniversary," they are giving her tonight a special celebration. For the occasion she has a gorgeous new pink evening gown; a wonderful string of Ceylon pearls, all the roses she loves best, and the grandest one-candle birthday cake ever seen. The rejuvenated Findley, Doctor Gaunt, and Judge Trumbull gayly vie with each other in offering pretty speeches to her, and in trying to express what her coming to them has meant in their lives.

JUDGE: I rise to propose a toast to our young godsend! Representing your financial manager on your right, your court physician on your left, I, as your legal adviser, thank you in their name and my own for what you have done for us. The eminent psychologist on my right has proved his theory beyond the shadow of a doubt—that we needed youth and inspiration to haul us out of our ruts. He is living proof of his own philosophy. (*Pointing at Findley*) And see how you have humanized that ancient fossil there! See the color and sparkle in his face! And as for me, madame, I am reborn. But your greatest miracle—you have roused our rascal Gordon to work!

FINDLEY: It's astonishing—upon my word! If he keeps this up, he'll have my position before the year's out!

JUDGE: So, having proved yourself capable as well as ornamental, we take pleasure in handing over to you the keys of this house, with the position of housekeeper. (*FINDLEY hands her a bunch of keys.*)

Sidney, absolutely unspoiled by all the kindness and devotion that has been lavished upon her in the last month,

is deeply touched. Fighting back her tears, she rises to make a little speech of thanks.

SIDNEY: You—you can never—never realize it—but to me it's been like coming out of a hopeless, dark cellar into sunlight to have come here. Mother told me you three were the most chivalrous men she'd ever known, because it's in your hearts! She was right! You haven't asked me a question—just taken me in trust. Oh, if you *could* only know what that meant! I don't want pearl necklaces. I just want to stay with you forever and ever and ever! (*She lays her head on the judge's immaculate shirt front and sobs in his arms.*)

DOCTOR GAUNT (*to SIDNEY, in an effort to dispel her tears*): Hello! Why are you wearing your blue slippers?

SIDNEY: They're the only ones I have.

DOCTOR GAUNT: No, they're not. We ordered plain pink satin fellows to go with this dress. I'm sorry if they didn't come in time.

SIDNEY: But I love the buckles on these!

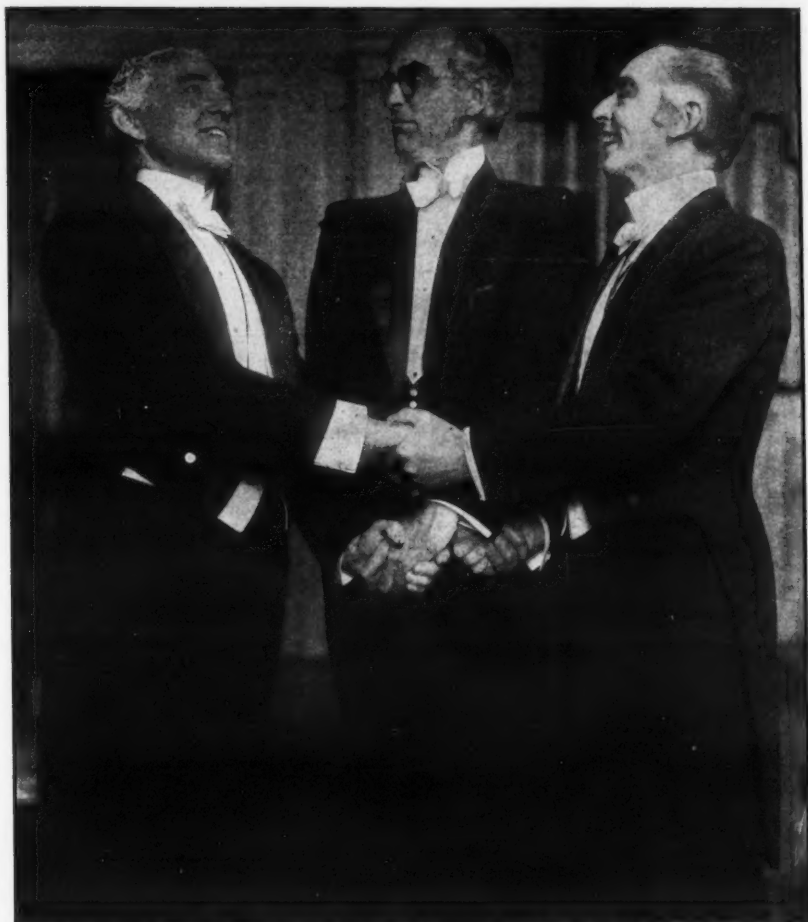
FINDLEY: We were assured by an extremely unpleasant young man that plain slippers were more the fashion for débutantes.

A little later, Gordon, now an aggressive young business man, bursts in to offer congratulations. Sidney delightedly displays her pearls and gown to his admiring eyes; whereupon they promptly become unconscious of the others, until Findley and the judge finally succeed in forcing Gordon's attention.

GORDON (*sternly, as he approaches his uncle, the distinguished financier*): Well, where were you this afternoon, sir? You've got yourself in a fine mess!

FINDLEY: How's that? ( *Icily*) What do you mean?

GORDON (*leaning forward grimly*):



JUDGE: Boys, it's like the old days! DOCTOR GAUNT: Yes, "One for all and all for one!"

Do you remember calling a director's meeting this afternoon at four o'clock?

FINDLEY (*with a violent start*): Good God—so I did!

GORDON: So you did—and I never saw an angrier bunch of men in my life!

FINDLEY (*in real dismay*): I forgot all about 'em! What did you do, Gordon?

GORDON: What did you think I'd do? I had the proxy and I stalled them. But I had an awful job squaring you. Now where were you?

FINDLEY (*sheepishly*): Er—ah—um—I had to take Sidney to see the flower show. It was the last day.

GORDON: The flower show! Listen—true education is learning to do the thing you don't want to do at the time

you don't want to do it. The trouble with you is you lack backbone, discipline, and all those other things—

FINDLEY: Well, hurry, eat your cake and go home. We're going out this evening. We're taking Sidney to hear her first grand opera.

GORDON: Flower shows and grand opera! Phew! Well, I appreciate your

SIDNEY (*in dismay*): Oh, dear—you haven't gone and bought me a present, Gordon?

GORDON: You bet I have! I thought, when you'd look at it, you'd think of the gratitude of the poor thing you've made a man of. I do hope you'll like it! (*Both are deeply moved. He kisses her, but she protests.*)



SIDNEY: Please no! You—you don't know me! We mustn't think of each other that way.

good taste and courtesy in *not* asking me, but as it's Sidney's birthday, I'll make a concession in this case and go along. I suppose I'll have to go home now and dress.

FINDLEY: Yes, we'd better get ready. We mustn't be late. (*Arm in arm, singing gayly, the three guardians exeunt, just as a servant comes in to announce that Miss Sidney's pink satin slippers have arrived.*)

Along with Sidney, Gordon presents her with a new wrist watch, bought with the first money he has ever earned.

SIDNEY: Please don't—not now! We mustn't think of each other that way.

GORDON: But it's too late. I do, and you know it. Don't you care a little?

SIDNEY: Yes—but I didn't encourage you, did I?

GORDON: I should say you didn't! (*He kisses her again and again, while she clings to him a moment as if against her will.*)

Urging Gordon away, Sidney shows him the keys of her new office as housekeeper; whereupon Gordon advises her that she'd better watch the servants.



Sidney steps out from behind the curtains,  
listening hard.

One of them has been seen going out  
very late at night and returning about

daybreak. A detective has told Gordon.

SIDNEY (*sitting down involuntarily*):  
A detective!

GORDON: Why, didn't you know this  
house was being watched?

SIDNEY (*deathly pale*): Watched—  
no—wha—what for?

GORDON: Judge Trumbull. He  
doesn't know it, but they think his life's  
in danger. You see, he's apt to be  
severe on criminals, and they don't like  
him. They nearly got him once before.  
There! I shouldn't have told you. It's  
frightened you. It's nothing at all—just  
a sort of precaution.

SIDNEY (*rising, in a quiet voice*): I'm  
not frightened!

Hardly five minutes elapse after Gor-  
don has finally succeeded in tearing him-  
self away before Sidney, standing still  
in terrible thought, hears harsh voices  
and a disturbance in the hall. Through  
the open door the butler is seen to fall  
under a heavy blow, and a burly, rough  
young man rushes in. He peers into  
Sidney's face, calling her by name.

SIDNEY (*in horror*): Benny! What  
are you doing here?

BENNY: I'm after the dog that sent  
me up! I've been waiting ten years  
to get him—damn him!

SIDNEY (*quickly*): No—no, Benny,  
you mustn't! Judge Trumbull is my  
friend. Oh, it's too horrible! You  
must go, Benny, please—I beg of you!  
Go—for God's sake!

Benny with great strength hurls her  
aside and, on the stairway, levels his  
gun at a door behind which Judge Trum-  
bull's voice can be faintly heard. Ter-  
ror-stricken, desperate, Sidney throws  
her arms across the door; then in a  
terrific struggle, in which Benny at-  
tempts to choke her, fairly drags him  
down the stairs, rushes to the window,  
and sounds a police whistle. An an-  
swering whistle comes at once, and  
Benny realizes that he is trapped. Sid-  
ney, however, grabs her keys and rushes  
him up a rear stairway to the skylight.

Poole and his detectives find the butler unconscious in the hall, and while Doctor Gaunt works over him, they search the house from cellar to roof. They know, of course, that Benny, whom they have been watching, has in some way eluded them, and give it as their opinion that an inside accomplice must have let him into the house and quickly closed the door. The servants are put through a thorough grilling, but without results. Findley, the judge, and the doctor are puzzled and anxious.

Then Sidney, in opera cloak, with her long gloves and fan, her slippers changed to the new pink satin ones, comes down the stairway. Though her manner is tense and alarmed, she forces a smile to her lips and, seeing their grave faces, begs to know what has happened. Clancy, the sleuth, who has been examining the roof, returns just then to ask if the door of the skylight is usually left open. Upon being assured by Findley that it is always kept locked, he produces a bunch of keys he has found in the open door. They are Sidney's keys. Against her, too, points the finger

of suspicion that it is she who has been seen stealing out of the house night after night. But although the description fits her fairly, the men are unable definitely to identify her.

Sidney tries desperately to maintain an expression of wonder and innocence. The three guardians, indignant, but absolutely nonplused, request Poole and his men to step into the next room. Judge Trumbull then questions Sidney, gently and particularly, as to everything



BENNY: Well, get out quick! Do you hear? You mustn't be found here. Go home—take it on the run!





SIDNEY: No, Benny, for God's sake! You must go, Benny, please—I beg of you!

that happened after they left the room, leaving her alone with Gordon. Sidney responds in broken sentences, but stoutly denies any knowledge of the criminal's entrance or escape.

JUDGE: Now, Sidney, don't let this frighten you. I've been too many years on the criminal bench to put too much faith in circumstantial evidence. But how could it be possible to have found a buckle from one of your blue satin slippers on the floor in front of the door to the skylight, when you say you weren't on that floor?

SIDNEY (*startled*): I—I don't know! But one of the buckles was loose—and I cut it off—but that was down here in this room.

JUDGE: You say you cut it off?

SIDNEY: Yes! It was hanging by a thread! And—oh, I remember now—I laid the buckle right down on the keys there on the table. But when I went upstairs, I forgot both the keys and the buckle!

JUDGE: Of course. When the man snatched up the keys, he grabbed this buckle with them, so when he started to unlock the skylight door, the buckle naturally dropped to the floor. Nothing could be more sensible!

SIDNEY (*relieved*): Yes!

The judge, having quietly sent a servant to bring Sidney's blue slippers, displays them.

FINDLEY: Why, both buckles are there! But where's the buckle you had in your hand, Jimmy?

JUDGE: I had no buckle! (*Shaking his head gravely*) There was no buckle! (*He turns sadly away, and sits down as one through with her. She bursts into tears.*)

DOCTOR (*in uttermost horror*): Sidney!

FINDLEY: My God!

SIDNEY (*desperately*): I do know him! I did go out at night! But I didn't know he was coming *here*! I didn't know he knew Judge Trumbull! I—I swear it!

FINDLEY (*coldly*): Now then, tell us everything. How did you come to know such a man?

SIDNEY: I—I met him—— (*Pulling*

*suddenly choking*) No—I won't lie to you! I can't! I—I didn't realize!

FINDLEY: Will you stop this damned nonsense and tell us the truth! We'll hand you bag and baggage over to the police if you don't come to your senses.

SIDNEY (*weeping, as she turns and runs up the stairs*): Turn me over to them, but they'll never get anything out of me—never—never—never!



DOCTOR GAUNT: Gray's all right. Quite unconscious—no bones broken, but just a clean blow.

*herself up with a sudden chill of terror.*) No—no—I can't tell you!

DOCTOR: Sidney, listen to me. You must try now, for all our sakes, to realize how terrible things look for you. You have confessed knowledge of a criminal who came here to-night to assassinate Judge Trumbull! And you helped him to escape?

SIDNEY (*fighting her emotion*): Yes.

DOCTOR: What possible relations could you have with such a creature?

SIDNEY: Listen—it's like this: I

The three bachelors are sitting in a dejection that borders on despair, when Gordon returns. It is evident to him that something ominous has occurred.

FINDLEY: Gordon, we accepted Sidney on faith, but we should have examined into her past a little more. Since you've been gone, an attempt was made on Judge Trumbull's life by a man who got into the house. Sidney knew him and helped him escape. She has confessed it all.

GORDON (*hotly*): And you mean to

say you believed it? Have you all gone mad? (*He rushes upstairs to find SIDNEY, but she has gone.*)

Poole comes in to announce that his men have located Benny, and that Sidney has probably gone to meet him.

GORDON (*white with anger*): You listen to me! You're all mistaken in Miss Fairchild! Why, we owe everything to her! I don't know what's happened to all of you! You're rotten, suspecting her! You've probably frightened her—that's it! I'll go with you, Poole. She needs some one!

FINDLEY: But she confessed she was guilty.

GORDON: And was that reason enough for you to believe her? You're just cynical, suspicious old men! Well, I'll never forgive you for this! You should have stood by her, instead of driving her out of the house! (*In a towering rage*) No, I won't listen! I'm through with all of you! I'm going to find her! Come on, Mr. Poole, out of this rotten house!

FINDLEY (*shouting in anger*): Gordon, you don't know what you're saying!

GORDON: Yes, I do know what I'm saying! I'm saying to hell with you! You three cowardly, wicked, blind old men! To hell with you! (*He dashes out of the house.*)

Two hours later a sour and saddened Findley sits grimly playing his game of solitaire. The judge wanders heartbrokenly about the house, unable to think of anything but Sidney.

JUDGE: It's no use pretending. I can't work. It's got me, Teddy.

FINDLEY: Let's forget it. We've got to. Let's talk of something cheerful. (*Pause*) You—you think of something cheerful, Jimmy.

JUDGE: It's unbelievable! I can't pretend, Teddy. I'm not cheerful and neither are you.

FINDLEY: Well—perhaps I'm not,

but I always feel like this on Saturday night. Next day's Sunday. Can't go to the office—makes me blue.

JUDGE: I know—but this is Thursday! (*DOCTOR GAUNT comes down the stairs.*)

DOCTOR: Hello, boys! How's the game going, Teddy? How about a little toddy, Jimmy? (*Slapping FINDLEY on back*) Eh? What do you say, you old card sharp?

FINDLEY: Come out from behind your mask, Buttercup! Get out of our ruts, eh? Lord, I like 'em!

DOCTOR: What's the matter with you, Teddy? Your nerves are upset.

Solemn and grim, Mrs. Saunders, one of the household's faithful servants, comes in to give "notice" to her astounded employers.

SAUNDERS (*tremulously*): I can't stand such goings on. After fifteen years of doing things by the clock—and then poor Miss Sidney—and to-night the police! (*Sniffing*) I'm upset, sir! I hate to go, and I don't know where I'm going, but I can't stand no more excitement! (*She walks out tearfully.*)

FINDLEY: I hope you're satisfied, Doctor Quack. Saunders was in a rut, well ordered and happy. She's been pulled out violently and rolled among your buttercups, and now look at her! And look at me! I feel fine! Brain specialist—bah!

DOCTOR (*picking up medical journal*): Did I write this, Teddy? Do you want to know something?

FINDLEY: No. I don't want to know a damned thing!

DOCTOR: We so-called psychologists are nothing but windbags. It's so easy to theorize, but at the first touch of real life to collapse like a pricked balloon! Still, I must have had some idea when I wrote this. (*Turning pages*) For instance, this paragraph on the chemical reaction of change. You must admit the change did lift us.



POOLE: Excuse me, Mr. Findley, but we can't leave anybody out in a case like this, and Clancy's description fits the young lady pretty close.

FINDLEY: I should say it did—and now look at us!

JUDGE: Come—come! We've got each other, anyway.

DOCTOR: Yes, Jimmy, there's something in that.

JUDGE: You're right, boys. Love of women is an unstable thing—for the most part founded on selfishness.

FINDLEY: You bet! From now on we're through with women! To hell with them!

Just then the telephone rings and all make a dash for it, fighting for the receiver.

FINDLEY: Here—get away! Let me have it! Go 'way! I have it! Hello, hello! What—what—who—who—what? *Reporters!* No, we don't want to see them!

Findley slams down the instrument, glares feelingly, and strides to his card table, where he proceeds to lay out a new game all wrong. The doctor and the judge sit disconsolately staring in front of them. Findley forgets his

game. Gradually their chins sink as all three sit in silent despair. Gordon enters, quite unobserved.

GORDON (*after a pause*): Well—I—I found her. (*No answer.*) I—I thought you'd be interested to know I'd—I'd seen her! (*No answer.*) They were going to lock her up with common criminals! (*FINDLEY squirms a trifle.*) With horrible women! (*DOCTOR squirms.*) Well—I knew I was right. She's innocent! (*All leap to their feet.*)

DOCTOR: Thank God—you've found new evidence! What was it?

GORDON: I've looked into her eyes.

FINDLEY (*disgustedly*): Bosh!

JUDGE (*with a sudden sharp glance at GORDON*): Why have you come here, Gordon? I thought you were through with us.

GORDON: I didn't want you to let Sidney go without a fair hearing. I just want you to question her. You've all been so clever proving her a criminal. Well—what was Benny's intent when he came here?

DOCTOR: To kill the judge, of course.

GORDON: Well—he didn't, did he? I've just seen him, and I can tell you he's the most dangerous kind of a criminal because he's mentally obsessed. He came in here a madman consumed with one idea—of killing you, judge. Well—why didn't he? He overpowered Gray easy enough. The house was his—you at his mercy. Did you ever stop to think that some one must have prevented him? That Sidney might have been that some one? In fact, that you owe your precious life to that girl because she fought him off and diverted his interest and got him out of the house?

FINDLEY: Then why didn't she tell us?

GORDON: Because she's got some damned good reason, that's why!

JUDGE: Gordon, we've had enough of this. This girl has *confessed*. She's plainly guilty!

GORDON: I wouldn't let them put her in a cell. I told the chief and Mr. Poole that you wanted particularly to question the prisoners yourself—before they were locked up. (*He steps to the door and signals POOLE to bring the prisoners in. Enter SIDNEY, with BENNY handcuffed to one of POOLE'S men.*)

At sight of Judge Trumbull, Benny becomes truculent and excited, his guard restraining him with difficulty. Doctor Gaunt studies him closely and expresses his opinion that the boy should be under medical observation in a hospital. When he speaks to him soothingly, Benny, like a confiding child, tells how he came to know Sidney. "She came to my place to see the boss," he says, but just as he starts to tell more, Sidney stops him with a frightened cry.

Gordon begs that he may see Sidney alone for a moment. He feels sure that now she will tell him the truth. The others go into the next room, the judge cross-examining Benny.

GORDON: Sidney, there's just one question I want to ask you. You'll tell me, won't you?

SIDNEY (*with an effort*): What—what is it?

GORDON (*with an enchanting smile*): Will you be my wife? I don't know if it's dawned on you yet—but I love you. (*SIDNEY breaks into tears.*) Don't cry, Sidney. You don't have to tell me anything. I know! And I know I'd be doing just what you are doing—if I only knew what the devil it was! And you've got to forgive those three wise men. They're all right at heart—but they just don't know—that's all. (*Holds her tenderly as he leads her into the library.*)

A servant enters with a stranger—a grim, elderly man, evidently broken in health—who is urgently seeking Poole. He is John Crawshay, an old college chum of Findley's, and the bank embezzler who escaped from prison with Benny.

FINDLEY: Jack Crawshay—as I live! Don't you remember me? I'm Findley, your old classmate.

CRAWSHAY (*embarrassed*): I haven't forgotten. But I'd like to see Mr. Poole.

FINDLEY: I was struck dumb, old boy, when I heard of you—your misfortune. It seemed impossible that Jack Crawshay— Well, I didn't believe it—that's all. I never believed that you were guilty, Jack.

CRAWSHAY (*after a long look*): I wasn't guilty. I was innocent of the actual charge. Those notes that convicted me were forgeries, but I'd overplayed the market and had no collateral. I was on the verge of ruin, so when the evidence was so circumstantial—I had no chance. But I'm not kicking. Now can I see Mr. Poole? I can't wait.

FINDLEY: Wait a minute. Did you know Benny wanted to kill Judge Trumbull?

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XI





CRAWSHAY: Yes. But I didn't think he'd attempt it. I thought it was just his talk. From a clever man, he's become half child. You see, his cell was next to mine. He nursed me and contrived my escape. (*Staring at FINDLEY impressively*) Teddy, they have imprisoned a young woman—Sidney Fairchild. She's innocent—absolutely innocent, I tell you!

FINDLEY (*with a start*): Yes, they have. But how did you know her?

CRAWSHAY: She visited the prison often. I made her come to this house and present that will. But try as I would, I couldn't stop her coming to me at night with food and medicine. She hoped, through the judge, to get me a new trial. For the sake of old friendship, have them liberate that girl. She's an angel!

FINDLEY: But I don't understand—why she did all this for you.

CRAWSHAY (*brokenly*): Teddy—don't you see? She's my little girl!

And so Sidney is cleared. It only remains for Benny to confess that he himself forged the notes that convicted Crawshay, and for the judge to promise that, upon the completion of a few formalities, Crawshay will be a free man.

The others gone, the three wise men

sit together with bowed heads and humbled spirits.

DOCTOR (*in a low voice*): I'll never write another thesis. I forgot the greatest power of all—faith!

FINDLEY (*clearing his throat*): Boys, we're three damned old dodoes!

JUDGE: Correct. This is no place for us.

(*Enter GRAY, the butler, with bandaged head, carrying a tray on which are three glasses of hot water and three red apples.*)

DOCTOR: What do you mean by getting up?

GRAY (*soberly*): It's bedtime, sir.

JUDGE (*laughing*): He comes like Fate to put us to bed.

GRAY: Yes, sir. Here's your hot water and apples.

DOCTOR (*throwing up his hands*): I surrender, Teddy! We can't escape our grooves!

JUDGE: You've won, Teddy!

FINDLEY: No, no—the quack is right. Take 'em away, Gray! No more "ruts" for us!

JUDGE: But what are we going to do?

FINDLEY: Do? Boys, we're going to roll among the buttercups! (*Arm in arm, the three march up the stairs, singing the "Soldiers' Chorus" from "Faust."*)

## TRUST

HE really loved her,  
Yet he told her everything.

She really loved him,  
Yet she told him nothing.

And they called this "happiness."

Now,  
If he had told her nothing,  
And she had told him everything,  
This they would have called "trust."

CARL GLICK.

# That Little Town

By Kay Cleaver Strahan

Author of the "Peggy-Mary" series, "The Dimity Dress," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

THERE is a little town—we'll say somewhere in the West, because that is such a fashionable phraseology nowadays—that you would begin by liking, and soon be liking better, and end by—— But how you thought of it, in the end, would depend entirely upon what manner of person you are.

Jimmie Foley and Hugh Woodward came to the little town because of the spruce trees up on the hills and the sawmill down by the river. Mr. Woodward had purchased the sawmill, and Jimmie owned a motor truck, so Jimmie asked Mr. Woodward for a job and got it, and after that Jimmie called Mr. Woodward "the boss," and Mr. Woodward called Jimmie "that red-headed truck driver."

In Kansas, Jimmie had left a girl whom he loved and whom he was going to marry by and by. In Pennsylvania, Mr. Woodward had left a woman whom he loved and whom he had married ten years before. He had left, also, a Hugh Woodward, junior, and a girl baby, Marguerita May, just at the cunningest toddling age.

He—Hugh Woodward, senior—was tall, inclined a bit to stoutness, inclined a bit to good-lookingness, with dark hair interestingly flecked with white, dark eyes only a trifle too keen, broad shoulders, soft silk shirts, and the kind of clothes one describes as "faultlessly tailored." Though none of that mattered much about Hugh Woodward. The thing that mattered most was the queer, down-cornered smile that he wore occasionally underneath a per-

fectly pointed mustache; just as the thing that mattered most about Jimmie was not his flagrantly red hair, or his doll-blue eyes, or his lack of inches, or the one big freckle that covered his face, but the broad, white, toothy-looking grin that he wore, most of the time, almost from ear to ear.

Hugh Woodward saved his smile, and passed it around at Mrs. Trent's charming little dinners, at the informal dances given by the Redworths, or at any of the festivities where were gathered the little town's smart set. There was a dash of snobbishness about Hugh which, like the liquor in the punch, did not show, but could be felt.

Caroline Redworth felt it, but, because she didn't know any better and because, in spite of her daddy's fifty thousand dollars and her own seventy inches, she was a simple little soul, she called it "breeding" and "aristocracy." She was eighteen years old. She had been graduated at seventeen from the little town's high school and, since then, she had been staying at home helping mamma and working on her music and her china painting.

To make matters worse, Caroline was lovely. She was one of those unfortunate girls and most fortunate women who begin at sixteen to look about twenty-five years old and stay looking about twenty-five years old until they are well past forty. She was tall, as we have said, and broad shouldered and deep bosomed. Her eyes were the clear brown color that coffee should be when it comes from the percolator; her

cheeks wore deep pink triangles that pointed deliberately down into the soft whiteness of her neck; her lips were firmly cut and red; her profile was cameo perfect and—believe it or not, it is true—never since “post office” and “clap-in-clap-out” days had she been kissed. Please take all this as an apology for Caroline, for she is going to need an apology pretty soon.

In the meantime—Jimmie. What was he doing, while Hugh was attending dinner parties and dancing with Caroline? Well, Jimmie was doing what he called “nothing much.” He was working hard all day. In the evenings, he helped Mrs. Pettison—he boarded with the Pettisons’—in her garden, and then he wrote a letter to the girl in Kansas, and then he walked down Main Street and distributed his grin and mailed his letter and went home again and to bed. It doesn’t sound interesting. It wasn’t interesting. But it was not intolerable except on Sundays, in July, at three o’clock in the afternoon.

This was the third Sunday in July. The little town was as oppressively hot as that corn patch, up on the south slope, used to be. At noon, Jimmie had eaten too much of a most excellent, but steaming meal. At one o’clock, he had finished writing his letter to the girl in Kansas. At half past two o’clock, he had wakened from a nap and he had a headache and a homesick ache. At three o’clock, he had washed his face and sopped his hair and brushed his clothes and put on his necktie and walked down to the post office and mailed the letter. As he came out of the post office he met Rosie Anderson and Effie Sawyer.

They wore, of course, short white skirts—Rosie’s had bright pink stripes in it—and corset covers elaborately trimmed with heavy crochet work and pink ribbons, covered, but not in the least concealed, by thin crêpe blouses.

They looked at Jimmie’s grin, and looked again, and smiled with a sort of brazen bashfulness.

“Lo, girls!” said Jimmie.

The girls nudged each other and giggled.

“Some ice cream?” suggested Jimmie. He was fearfully lonesome, remember.

Rosie blushed and looked down and pivoted on one heel. Effie blushed and looked down and traced a crack in the sidewalk with the toe of a soiled white oxford.

“Come on,” urged Jimmie.

“Well——” said the girls.

So the three of them went into Roderin’s drug store and sat down at one of the round tables, with paper napkins and fans in a holder in the center, and ate three strawberry sundaes.

“Where are you girls goin’ now?” asked Jimmie, when the three had come out into the heat of Main Street again.

“No place, much,” answered Rosie, with provocative indefiniteness.

Mr. Woodward, in his big black car, with Caroline Redworth beside him on the front seat and nobody at all in the back seats, whirled past them. Longing and envy were in the girls’ eyes as they watched it disappear.

Inspiration came to Jimmie.

“Say,” he offered, “I got a dandy little truck down here in the Fashion Garage. Whata you girls say we take it out and go for a ride over to the river? It’ll be cool ridin’, anyway.”

You know what happened. You know that half an hour later, far out on Wynooski Street—that street where nobody lives—Jimmie in his truck met Rosie standing under a maple tree, and helped her up to the seat beside him, and they clattered away toward the river.

Effie, you know, thoroughly versed in Main Street ethics and etiquette, had gone home. She had seen, though Jimmie had tried to be impartial with his



And Jimmie put an arm about her and told her, again, that she was a classy little kid.

grin, that he had managed only the corners of it for her. Had the smiles been for Effie, then Rosie would have gone home. "Two's a company, three's a crowd," was an article of faith with the Main Street girls.

Up on the high seat beside him, Rosie told Jimmie that, gee, this was great! And Jimmie told Rosie he was glad she liked it. Rosie told Jimmie that the

girls in this town never did have any fun, and Jimmie told Rosie he knew how it was. Rosie told Jimmie that she hoped he wouldn't think she was tough, coming out with him like this; she hardly ever, she explained, picked up fellows on the street, but she could tell from his face that he wasn't a fresh guy. Jimmie told Rosie that she was a classy little kid.

About then, in the big black car, Caroline told Mr. Woodward that this was glorious, and Mr. Woodward told Caroline that he was glad she thought so. Caroline told Mr. Woodward that life in a little town was ferociously dull, and Mr. Woodward told Caroline that indeed he understood. Caroline told Mr. Woodward that she hoped he wouldn't consider her quite too frightfully unconventional, coming out this way, unchaperoned, with him; she didn't, she explained, make a practice of doing that sort of thing, but, somehow, with him, it seemed different. Mr. Woodward told Caroline that she was most kind, to take pity on his loneliness, and that she couldn't think how he appreciated it.

In the grove of scrub-oak trees, down on the river bank, an hour later, Jimmie, who had been lying flat on his back looking up at the sky and at Rosie's chin as she sat above him, rose up suddenly and kissed her. It was an impetuous little kiss, sort of shy and silly, but it landed on her lips; so she gave him a kiss in return, and Jimmie put an arm about her and told her, again, that she was a classy little kid, and she put her head on his shoulder and sighed, and there was a long silence. Then—almost, it would seem, because he did not know what else to do—Jimmie kissed her again. It was not such a shy kiss this time; so, instead of giving him one in return, she drew away from him and looked at him with eyes clouded a bit, and said:

"Do—you love me?"

The girl in Kansas appeared, just then, and looked at Jimmie with wide, trusting eyes. He took his arm from about Rosie's waist, and he said:

"Darn it—no!"

Rosie gasped: "Then—you hadn't ought to uv——"

"I know it, darn it!" said Jimmie.

Rosie began to weep a little.

"I—ain't like that."

"I know you ain't," said Jimmie.

"Then why——"

"I'm a son of a gun," said Jimmie, "that's all. I was awful lonesome, and you looked so kind of sweet, and I just did it without thinkin'. I'm a rotter. But see here, girlie——"

And then he told her about the girl in Kansas.

"I'd think," reproved Rosie, when he had finished the telling, "that you'd be ashamed, carryin' on with other girls when you're waitin' on a nice girl like her!"

"I am ashamed," said Jimmie.

"Well," said Rosie, "I guess we'd better go home."

She stood up and brushed the leaves from her dress, and Jimmie cranked his truck, and she climbed up to the seat beside him, and they clattered away, back to Wynoski Street.

"You didn't think, did you," questioned Rosie, just before she climbed down from the high seat, "that I was that kind of a girl?"

"No," Jimmie answered, "I knew you were a nice little kid. It was all my fault. You just forget it, won't you, girlie?"

About this time, on a bench in the maple woods far down the river's bank, Hugh, who had been sitting beside Caroline, looking across the river and at Caroline's lovely red lips, leaned toward her suddenly and kissed her full on those lips, and they kissed his in return. So he put an arm about her and told her that she was beautiful, and she rested her head on his shoulder and sighed, and there was a long silence. Then—almost, it would seem, because he did not know what else to do—he kissed her again and gathered her closer to him. She drew away, and looked at him with eyes clouded a bit, and said:

"Hugh—you care?"

The woman in Pennsylvania ap-



peared, just then, and beside her were Hugh, junior, and Marguerita May, just at the cunningest toddling age. For an instant Hugh hesitated and then, because he was not Jimmie and because Caroline was not Rosie, he answered:

"Girl—girl—you know I care!"

"Oh," breathed Caroline, "oh—oh! I never dared hope that you might care for—me! Hugh dear—I have dreamed. We can be so happy!"

"But, Caroline, you—you're not forgetting that I'm married?"

A blush, red hot and hurting, spread over Caroline's face, and a little sound that was almost a moan came from her lips.

"I—I had forgotten," she said. That was not strange because never once before had Hugh mentioned his wife to her. "And—and you love her?" Caroline finished.

In hell somewhere, of course, there is a pit with more brightly burning coals and more malignant demon attendants, and it is reserved for the earth people who are too cowardly to tell straightforward lies.

"What do you think, dear?" was Hugh's answer to her question.

Perhaps now you had better turn back the page and read Caroline's apology—her youth, her ignorance, her replete imagination, her starved emotions.

"Well, then," she said, and put her cheek to his, "well, then, we won't let it spoil our lives, will we, Hugh, now that we have found each other at last?"

Caroline, you see, read modern novels, wherein wrong is usually right, and right so abstract that it is quite unrecognizable.

For answer, Hugh took her hands and kissed them. Kissing hands is always the preparatory act to renunciation. Caroline knew that; so:

"Hugh—you won't give me up?"

"Dear girl, what else is there for us?"

"There is—everything! Life here together, and love, and——"

"You mean?"—he did not try to keep the shocked disapproval from his voice—"you mean divorce?"

"It isn't right," she cribbed inaccurately from a recent best seller, "it's wicked for people who no longer love to keep up the shallow pretenses under the cover of—in the chains of matrimony!"

"But you! Do you think I could let your wonder, your freshness and youth, be dragged in the mire of a divorce court?"

"It wouldn't need to be like that. You could get it—very quietly. Probably she would get it—back there."

"Do you know—no, I know you can't know what it means to a young girl to marry a divorced man. It means loss of social position, of respect, of——"

"No," she protested, "it doesn't—not here. No one thinks that way of divorce out here. Of course if you and—Mrs. Woodward had lived here, and people had liked her, it might be different. But not knowing her at all, people will never think of it. Why, Mr. Turbintreat was a divorced man when he married Helen Root, and no one thought a thing about it. They had a church wedding and wonderful presents and everything."

"You mean," he questioned, "that in this town divorce carries with it no stigma, no obloquy?"

"Not a bit. I think we Westerners are freer, more advanced, than you people back East. Of course, if I had taken you away from her—— But you had really left her before you even met me. No—it wouldn't make the least difference out here. And why should it?"

"Only," said Hugh, "we must think about—her."

"Does she—love you?" quavered Caroline.



For an instant Hugh hesitated and then, because he was not Jimmie, and because Caroline was not Rosie, he answered: "Girl—girl—you know I care!"

"I'm afraid," he answered, "that she does."

"Oh!" said Caroline, and then, for no apparent reason—simply for every reason—she began to cry.

"Caroline," he pleaded, "dear girl! I mean that we must think of—everything—that we mustn't act hastily."

She stood up, blinking the tears away, trying to smile.

"We must go home now. Mamma and papa will have come in, and they'll worry."

"Hugh," said Caroline, just before she stepped out of the big black car, "Hugh, I understand. Of course we

mustn't act hastily. You don't think me forward, brazen, because of the way I talked out there, do you?"

"I think," Hugh assured her, "that you're a wonderful girl. I was at fault for—doing what I did before I was free. You'll forgive me that, won't you?"

It was past nine o'clock that evening when Jimmie and Hugh met in the post office. Jimmie had just mailed a letter, and Hugh had one in his hand ready to mail. And the letter that Jimmie had just mailed said this:

DEAREST SWEETHEART: Gee, kid, but I've been lonesome to-day! I guess I never missed you so much as I missed you to-day. Honest, I was half nutty, I missed you so bad to-day. So I got to thinking things over, and I don't see why we need to wait any longer to get married. I am making good money now, and I was talking to Mrs. Pettison to-night, and she showed me a swell little place that is for rent, all furnished up, and the rent is only ten plunks a month, and she says living is so cheap here that we could save a lot out of what I'm making.

If you'll just say yes, honey, I'll take a week off and come back and get you. I know you'd like it fine here. This is one swell little town. All the folks are so nice and friendly, and there are no tough joints nor anything like that in town. I've been around a lot, you know, girlie, and, honest, I've never seen a place I'd sooner set up our home in.

Mrs. Pettison thinks we could buy the little house I was telling you about by paying some down and a little each month. I think that would be fine, don't you? I'm tired of chasing around, and I know you'd like to be settled. And, dearie, another thing. They say the schools are fine here, and all the kids I see on the street seem to be clean and real polite, and our church has a little college right here in town.

Well, dear, no more for to-night, but talk it over with your mother and then write to me right away, for I'll just be holding my breath till I hear from you. Be sure and tell your mother what a fine little town this is, and how I know you wouldn't get lonesome here.

Lots of love to my sweet little girl from her  
JIMMIE.

And the letter that Hugh was about to mail said this:

MY DEAREST MARGUERITA: To-day has been a long day and a lonely one, but not profitless, because it has forced me to a decision—that I cannot allow you and the babies to join me here, as we had planned. So, to-morrow, I am going to put the mill in an agent's hands, for sale, and am coming home to you as soon as possible. Financially, I shall probably lose heavily, but the truth of the matter is that no decent man could, willingly, bring his family even for a short time to such a town as this.

As for rearing our children in this atmosphere—it is unthinkable! Even the so-called "best people" of the place have a laxity of moral principle that is appalling. I have been trying to blind myself to the utter immorality of the place because of the financial future which I could see here. But, to succeed, I should have to stay here, we should have to make our home here, and it is not a fit place for you nor a safe place for the children.

I hope to get away from here some time next week, though I may be delayed until the following week. In any case, I shall send you a telegram, letting you know when I shall arrive at home.

It is sweet to know that you will approve of and agree with your devoted husband,  
HUGH.

But the odd part of it is that Jimmie believed he had written all the truth, and Hugh believed that he had written all the truth. Yes—that is the odd part of it.



# The Precious Hour

By Winona Godfrey

Author of "The Beholder of Beauty," "Adele, Ltd.," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY O. STEWARD IMHOFF

Such a girl!—and such a moment! No wonder two men were anxious!

THE two young men stood on the tiny beach of Missing Rock and stared in a sort of dazed consternation at the spot where their launch had gone down.

It was called Missing Rock because, though at low tide it showed two baby peaks and this twenty-foot half-saucer beach, at high tide the whole thing had disappeared under the sea, and at all times it was slud off completely from the view of the mainland beach by the taller, interposing Signal Rock.

These young men resembled nothing so much as two castaway movie heroes. The elegance of their silk shirts and white flannel trousers, sopping wet and clinging to their slender figures, added grotesqueness rather than pathos to their appearance. Harley Ames, the reformer, the social worker, the uplifter, being dark eyed, wore a wine-colored tie that hung askew and was transferring red smears and blotches to the delicate fabric of his shirt. Miles Castle, the business man, support of his gentle mother and crippled brother, being blue eyed, wore a blue tie; and, blue being a fast color, he congratulated himself that it was not, like Harley's, imparting futurist designs to his chest.

As with one gesture, each lifted a hand to put back his streaming forehead, and in the dark eyes of Ames and the blue eyes of Castle there was a *very* troubled look. They had not been in any particular danger, for the launch had sunk in such shallow water that,

after a few floundering strokes, they had been able to wade ashore. They were at the moment in no danger whatever; indeed, the tiny cove was pleasantly sheltered and warm with sunshine. Nevertheless, each looked out to sea with a very troubled gaze indeed, and then, as before with one accord, each shifted his eyes to the girl between them.

She lay on her side at full length upon the white sand, like a slain Diana or a drowned Ariadne cast up by the adoring sea, but her attitude was that of ease and vitality instead of the abandon of death. The fine stuff of her drenched gown clung to her slender legs and outlined her round breasts. The eager sun picked out a thousand golden glints in the loosened chestnut hair that cuddled her shoulder. Her cheeks were warmly colored, and though she was not smiling, her lips could not be called unsmiling either. It seemed as if her eyes must be seen, to decide that, but they were veiled. Not closed—from under lowered lids, her long hazel eyes looked out, too, over the gay, tumbling sea, dreamily.

The warm sand cradled her, the sun dried her garments gently. She was not, apparently, accepting any responsibility in the matter of their extrication from this common peril. Were there not here two stalwart youths ready to die for her? Was it not merely a question of which should have the honor? Perhaps she thought it

unkind, a betrayal of prejudice, to cast the deciding vote.

"The thing to do," suggested Harley Ames, "is to slip out just as the tide turns. Then, when you've got around the point here toward Signal, it'll carry you along to the beach."

"It won't be a bad swim to-day," affirmed young Castle. "The water's smooth and warm, and the tide'll be with you."

"They say there's not a foot above water here when the tide's in," observed Ames. His eyes met Castle's significantly above the quiet and lovely figure of the girl.

"They ought to have a patrol boat," complained Castle, frowning.

"Chance of any boat passing close enough to see us?" Ames asked slowly. Castle shook his head.

"We don't dare wait very long."

"That confounded launch!" cried Ames. "You'd think she'd been made of cheese! When I see that fellow we got her from——"

"He'll sue you for losing her," put in Castle.

Again that little silence, as significant, uncomfortable, and vaguely irritating as a stage wait. The girl did not stir.

"Cold, Maribel?" Ames inquired tenderly.

For a second the hazel eyes, seeming flecked with the omnipresent sunshine, too, were unveiled to his.

"No," she murmured sleepily. "It's fine here. I'm just getting toasted clear through."

Perhaps something in that momentary glance spurred him. Ames kicked off his low shoes and began pulling at the wet knot of the red tie.

"I'm going, Miles," he announced briefly.

"I don't know why you should go," returned Castle. "I guess there's not much danger, but it's always a chance. I'll go, Harley." And he began pull-

ing at the blue tie. "I'll send a boat back for you and—Maribel."

Neither had before ventured beyond "Miss Brewster."

"No," Ames objected. "You're too valuable, Miles, to risk. Of course I don't think there's any danger, but there's your mother and poor Ned crippled so. What would they do without you if—if anything happened?"

"How about you, too, then?" retorted Castle. "Isn't your life precious—to the race? Is there anybody to finish your book and carry on your work as you can?"

The eyes of the young reformer flashed and his head went up.

"Isn't it good to know that our lives are precious, Miles? But the one who goes *mustn't* fail, or the two who are left will be lost, too."

Both stiffened and straightened. *The two who are left!* While one went gallantly to save, the other would be left behind to console, perhaps to—wool! Suppose the one, alone, struggling, should be overwhelmed by the cruel sea, should give up his life and yet send no succor? He who remained, even though he, too, must die, would not go under the cold water *alone*. He would have had his hour! Surely she who had never favored one the tiniest fraction more than the other must turn at last to him who was beside her.

Suppose the matter did not end so tragically. Which would be her hero—he who offered himself to the sea or he who watched with her the hungry waves crawling up the vanishing sand? Above the prostrate, graceful length of Maribel, the two silently questioned each other, and each himself and fate.

Most brave deeds are done upon the moment's urge, with no time to weigh nicely the pros and cons of the situation. It is probable that those in imminent peril do not weigh the *great* issues at all. Now these two had time to think. It is possible that neither



"Cold, Maribel?" Ames inquired tenderly.

was overconsidering the preservation of that bauble, his own life. It was doubtless due to the cursed fact that there was no tremendous hurry that neither rushed headlong into the sea to gain first right by being first away.

Harley Ames, having conquered the wet knot, threw away his tie and opened his stained shirt at the throat.

"I'll go," he repeated. "I'll make it all right, so there's no use arguing."

"No," again objected the generous Castle. "You stay here. I can make it easy. You stay here, Harley, and take care of—her."

The lovely Maribel had now drawn herself up into a sitting posture. Having discovered a few undislodged hairpins, she proceeded to wind her hair

tightly around her head and secure it. From the calm detachment of her expression, she might have been entirely unaware of the presence of any other human being—might, indeed, have been sitting in her own boudoir.

The two young men stopped obstructing each other's generous offers of self-immolation and turned their attention to the ever-charming Maribel.

Now Maribel was never a garrulous person, but it occurred at this moment to her cavaliers that her failure to participate in this important question was really rather amazing.

Her hair bound coronet fashion, Maribel turned her face up sidewise, first toward Harley Ames and then toward Miles Castle. To each she gave



the same slow, mysterious smile, the same friendly, half-veiled glance. Then she extended a hand to each, and they drew her to her feet.

And then for the first time she gave sign of not having been wholly deaf to their affectionate altercation.

"Well, which one of you is going to swim to the Signal? Within the next few minutes is the time for a good start."

"I'm going," said Ames.

"No, I will," said Castle.

"Think of his mother and brother," said Ames.

"Think of his work and his book," said Castle.

"I don't think there's a bit of danger," said Maribel.

"Oh, we're not *thinking* of the danger, Maribel!" exclaimed Miles Castle with dignity. "The rivalry is simply as to who—shall stay with you!"

Maribel laughed—a little, low, cooing chuckle.

"You're both such awfully nice boys," she pondered judicially, and again she turned her head from one to the other in a birdlike movement. "You're both young and handsome, with wonderful lives before you. How dare I decide between you?"

"Oh, don't bother about our wonderful lives!" cried the ardent Ames. "Just say which one shall have this hour with you!"

"You foolish darlings!" murmured Maribel. She took her own glowing cheeks between two slightly sandy palms. "Must I choose?" she sighed.

"Yes," they breathed in unison.

"Then I must devise some worthy scales. Let me see. Turn, both of you, and walk to the farthest rock there. I'll decide while you walk. The one I call—shall—go."

They turned, heads up, eyes straight ahead, and marched up the little beach. At the cliff, no voice hailing, they paused, uncertain.

Then suddenly came a gay halloo. Both darted around like tops.

The bright head of Maribel appeared laughingly above the little wave crests. Upon the shore was the small heap of her crumpled gown. She lifted a bare white arm and waved to them.

"It's all right, boys," she called cheerily. "I know you can't swim. I'll go over and send a boat!"

With the easy grace of Mermaid Kellermann, she dived through the merry sea and left them to their hour—together.

## IN THE CAFÉ

**I** THINK I shall kill the woman at the next table.

From my vantage point, my table half-concealed behind a clump of artificial palms, I have watched her for the last hour deliberately and steadily making a fool of her escort. Though his face shows him plainly to be somewhat a man of the world, he is gazing upon her with the sickening adoration of a gangling seventeen-year-old in the first throes of puppy love.

Their table is a conspicuous one, and the other diners are not overlooking the little comedy, but are enjoying it to the full.

And the fool, fascinated by her flashing beauty, is steadily growing worse. In another five minutes, he will be eating out of her hand. He is playing the part of a clown, a rube, but his beauty-maddened senses fail to realize it. But the woman knows and is proud, much as a person is proud when he is displaying the tricks of a well-trained young terrier puppy to the world.

I think I shall kill the woman at the next table.

The man is my husband.

# A Trick of the Gods

By Edith Bishop Sherman

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

**If you had been in Holden's place—trusting husband that you are—how would things have looked to you? And what would you have done?**

THE whisper pierced his ears like a scream, but his face remained unchanged as he turned away from the scented dusk of the little anteroom. Back in the glare of the hotel lobby, he spoke to passing acquaintances, frowned at a bell boy who banged his knees with a valise, looked up at the clock on the balcony, and then abruptly realized that he could not meet Lisba now. He was afraid of himself.

Scribbling a hasty note on a card, he went to the desk for an envelope and left instructions with the clerk there that the note was to be delivered to his wife when she arrived at their appointed rendezvous. Then he went back to his office.

Once safely within its shelter, he sank wearily into his chair and plunged his face in his hands. God, to think that Lisba, his wife, should have become a creature to be gossiped over! What was it they had said, those two cats sitting there in the artificial darkness of the anteroom, fit place of intrigue for beasts of their kind?

"There he is, my dear—Robert Holden. Yes, it's his wife. Hadn't you heard? Why, John Artwright, the author— Such an affair! My maid—intimate with their cook— Artwright there every morning as soon as Holden leaves— Always the way—every one knows it but the husband."

A groan tore its way up from Holden's heart. Fool, fool that he had been not to have seen it! Other men's wives had played the game, but somehow

Lisba, with her great dark eyes, her grave smile, her quaint, serious ways, had seemed different. So this was why she had asked to have a separate sleeping apartment, why she had let him breakfast in lonely solitude morning after morning, had pleaded previous engagements—probably with Artwright—when he had asked her to go places with him. And he had been so sure of her, so complacently sure of her virtue and wifely love for him! And Artwright, that drunken cad! Why, he, too, was married!

For an instant Holden experienced a sort of fellow sympathy for Artwright's wife, whom he had never seen. He wondered what she was like. And at that the gods laughed, for in answer to the beckoning hand of Fate, Holden's assistant, Logan, knocked upon his employer's door and, entering, handed him a card that bore the legend: "Mrs. John Artwright."

Holden, staring down at the bit of pasteboard, yielded to the panic that swept over him.

"I can't see her now, Logan. It's— it's after office hours. Besides, I've got to get away early. The wife expects me. Our wedding anniversary, you know. Tell her I can't see her. Get rid of her some way!"

Logan's face told him that he had made a mess of it, but Holden cared only for the relief that came to him at the closing of his office door. His relief, however, did not endure long. Logan came back.

"What the devil!" Holden swung around.

"Mr. Holden, she seems awfully upset. I can't get rid of her, sir. She says it's a matter of the utmost importance, and begged so hard that I said I'd come back and ask you again. She says, sir, that she's going to wait all night unless you see her now."

little murmur of thanks, then sat twisting her gloved fingers in an agony of embarrassment. Holden felt sorry for her. She was so out of her element. She needed a tea wagon before her, being the sort of person who could rattle a tea ball alluringly and hand you a cup of tea with all the poise which was absent now.



Holden's intense gaze never wavered from her face. "Well"—she drew a sharp breath—"I've decided to bring suit against him for divorce."

Holden, silently cursing the fact that his office had but one exit—through the outer room where stood his unwelcome visitor—gave a hopeless shrug and nodded. Fate was stronger than he, after all.

"Mr. Holden?"

A soft voice came from the doorway. Looking up, the lawyer saw a vision in gray, and in answer to the inevitable appeal beauty always makes to his sex, sprang to his feet and swept forward a chair. His visitor accepted it with a

"You wished to see me?" he suggested.

The girl raised her eyes. His tired young face looked back at her kindly.

"You must think me very persistent, Mr. Holden."

"Not at all," answered Holden, as she paused. Alas for the veneer life forces upon us!

"But I felt that I must see you to-night," the girl hurried on. "You see—Mr. Holden—you see, my husband and I have separated. Yesterday I

went to his room for some of my belongings. I had left very hurriedly—and there, in full view upon his desk, I saw some papers. It was wrong of me, perhaps, but—I took them and read them and found them to be—love letters from some woman to my—husband. Among the letters, too, I found a photograph of a beautiful woman—dark eyes, you know—dark hair—Oh, she was beautiful! I am an artist, and the artist in me adored her loveliness, even while the woman in me hated it."

"Yes?"

Holden's intense gaze never wavered from her face. He leaned forward in his interest and, in doing so, knocked over his wife's photograph. Quite carelessly, he covered it with his arm.

"Yes?" he asked again.

"Well"—she drew a sharp breath—"I've decided to bring suit against him for divorce."

"But, my dear lady," protested Holden, "can you prove that they are letters, love letters, written to your husband by some other woman? Are you not rushing rather blindly into this thing?"

His caller flushed.

"No," she said, her voice very hard, "I am not rushing blindly into this, Mr. Holden. There will be cruelty in the charges, too. My—my husband struck me. He was drunk, but that can't excuse him. He had always been good to me, though, Mr. Holden, though we had grown apart since our baby girl died. She came the first year we were married, and after she died, we each sought our own work as a safety valve for our disappointment and sorrow. We should have had more children; I can see that now. Children are love's gifts that keep love a wonder thing."

Holden found himself regarding her respectfully. For all her youthful appearance, she had thought deep thoughts in her yellow head. She had

loved and had suffered and had formed a philosophy all her own. But did she or did she not suspect Lisboa?

"And who is the other woman?" he asked quietly. He wondered if she could hear his heart pounding, pounding against his ribs.

"I don't know," was her amazing answer.

"What?" exclaimed the lawyer.

"No." She shook her head. "You see the letters are typewritten and are signed only by initials. And as I have been out West for months, I suspected nothing until I entered my husband's study, as I said, and there found the letters and the photograph. But, oh, Mr. Holden, you *will* take my case, won't you?" Her voice dropped to a note of pleading. "I don't know of any other lawyer, and somehow—I feel as if I could trust you. As for evidence—isn't there—aren't there ways to obtain that by hiring detectives?"

Something within Holden seemed to snap during the tense moments that followed. Indeed, this was a fitting trick of the gods, this situation in which he found himself! To be hired to trap his own wife! Suddenly he threw back his head and laughed, a sharp, wild laugh that left him shaking all over and caused his client to regard him with startled eyes. Pride made him grasp at his fleeing self-control.

"I beg your pardon," he gasped, pulling out his handkerchief, wiping his eyes, adjusting his vest, smoothing away all signs of mirth, "I beg your pardon, but I just happened to wonder if I knew the lady in question. It would be so—so amusing, you know. Well, Mrs. Artwright"—he sobered, though, to tell the truth, his eyes, somber, watchful, had been anything but mirthful—"I shall be very glad to consider your case, and"—by this time he was upon his feet, skillfully ushering the lady to the door—"will you let me have the letters and the photograph?"



When Holden spoke again, his voice was deep, like the roar of a tiger about to spring:  
*"What have you there?"*

"Of course. I have them here." She opened her hang bag, produced a thin bundle of papers, then uttered a little cry. "Why, the photograph isn't here! How stupid of me! I must have left it on my dressing table! Oh, how stupid of me!"

"It doesn't matter, Mrs. Artwright." Although Holden spoke evenly, he knew, now, how a death-sentenced man must feel at news of a reprieve. "You can send it to me by messenger. If you start it on its way as soon as you reach your lodgings, it will reach me right after dinner. I should—I should like to have it to-night, if possible, for reasons—legal reasons—of my own."

"I will send it, Mr. Holden. And thank you for being so patient with me. It must be such a bore to be forever listening to other people's troubles."

"I assure you, Mrs. Artwright, they soon seem like my own, so I get used to them."

Holden's smile was cynical, but the girl thought it merely tired, and with another little murmur of gratitude, was gone.

Holden walked over to his desk, after closing the door, and stood hesitating there, the letters held loosely in his hand. Somehow he felt as if Lisba were standing beside him, her dark eyes questioning, hurt, her white hands out-

stretched in dumb pleading. Then the image of Artwright flitted across his weary brain. The fellow was handsome—no denying that—and gifted. Just the volatile sort that would attract Lisba's serious nature. Yet if she were not guilty! If the letters proved not to be hers! If the photograph were of some other woman! If the whisper proved to be merely idle, malicious rumor! Suddenly he felt that he could not know soon enough.

With a quick gesture, he spread out the first letter and read the throbbing, passionate thing to the end. Then the initials at the foot of the page sprang to meet his gaze and, very carefully, very methodically, he folded that letter and went on to the next and the next. There were only three—just three letters to wreck a man's life. But the three were enough, for, you see, the initials were his wife's initials!

During dinner that evening, Lisba Holden glanced more than once across the table at her husband. Could he possibly suspect? He seemed so unusually distraught. Yet their tête-à-tête dinner was progressing smoothly, for Lisba, in spite of her carefree, useless girlhood, had developed a knack of running her household without friction. He had complimented her upon her new dinner gown—a dull-red velvet that set off her dark beauty as the jungle underbrush sets off an exotic flower—and he had kissed her lightly as he had presented her with a gift, a necklace of rare pearls.

Lisba shivered slightly as she felt the pearls pressing her throat. Pearls for tears, she remembered. Then she smiled. There was so much to gain and nothing to lose in the game she was playing, for dear John Artwright was so patient, so fair about it all. And what fun to surprise them, those people who took her for granted, who thought her a shallow, settled-down young mar-

ried woman! Oh, Bob could not possibly suspect! She had been too careful for that. Funny, dull, practical old Bob!

Through with dinner, Lisba led the way into the softly lighted library, where she curled up in a big chair before the glowing wood fire.

"There's your chair, Bob." She indicated the one she had placed herself, that afternoon, near hers. "It's to be strictly domestic to-night, if you don't mind."

Robert Holden winced. Mind! The hateful image of Artwright came again into his mind. How many times had he occupied that chair beside Lisba, drinking in her dark loveliness, perhaps holding her hand, perhaps kissing—Holden suddenly turned blindly and went into the adjoining music room.

"Play some of the old things, Bob," Lisba called after him lazily. She seemed bent upon recalling the past to-night, that happy past of their courtship days when he had played to her and she had sat dreaming beside him.

He seated himself upon the piano bench now and struck a few random chords. Then the music lover in him awoke, and he drifted into a Chopin nocturne. And as he played, his turbulent thoughts calmed themselves. She was there—Lisba, his wife—safe in the next room, safe in his home. Surely, surely the whisper had been wrong! And it had all been a bad nightmare, a horrible coincidence! He stopped playing at last, and got up from the piano. He would tell Lisba about it, and they would laugh at it together.

"Lisba—" he began, appearing unexpectedly in the doorway.

Lisba started and thrust something back into the bosom of her gown, over her heart. When Holden spoke again, his voice was deep, like the roar of a tiger about to spring:

"What have you there?"

"What do you mean?" She tried to



asked it coldly. Really, Bob had startled her insufferably.

"Mean?" Holden took a few swift steps toward her. "I mean what I say! What were you reading?"

"Why, nothing at all." Lisba tried to laugh. What on earth had come over him!

"You were reading something! What was it?" Holden watched her with eyes that seemed to burn her—remorseless eyes they were, eyes that told her, all of a sudden, that she need never expect mercy from their owner.

With a quick turn, she wheeled and, drawing a piece of paper from her dress, threw it into the fire, where the flames leaped at it and devoured it.

"Now," she said, "you will never know from me. And I shall go away! I never want to see you again! I hate you! You—you doubter!"

Holden had stood as if paralyzed—but at her words he came to life. He strode over to her and stood glaring down at her. Then, as if maddened beyond endurance by her scornful face, he raised his hand and struck her. She staggered, tried to save herself, and fell upon the slippery floor, and a demon in him laughed as she struggled to her knees and started to crawl toward the chair she had placed for him that afternoon.

"You little fool! Did you think you could put it over on me as easily as that? Don't you think I know that you were reading a love letter from your lover, John Artwright?" He laughed again as he stood watching her efforts to raise herself by the arm of the chair.

At his words, she turned her white face toward him. Holden, amused, watched a trickle of blood coursing down the side of her forehead. His ring must have cut her.

"John Artwright—my lover?" she whispered with stiff lips. She seemed dazed.

Her husband laughed, mocked her.

"Your lover—John Artwright!" he repeated and laughed and laughed. "Yes, dear, faithful wife, your lover, John Artwright!" He changed his manner, became ferocious again. "You fool, you fool! Don't you suppose I know? Don't you suppose every one knows? Did you fondly delude yourself with the old bromide, 'Every one knows it but the husband?' Did you? Did you?"

As she sank into blessed unconsciousness, afar off Lisba heard the telephone bell ring.

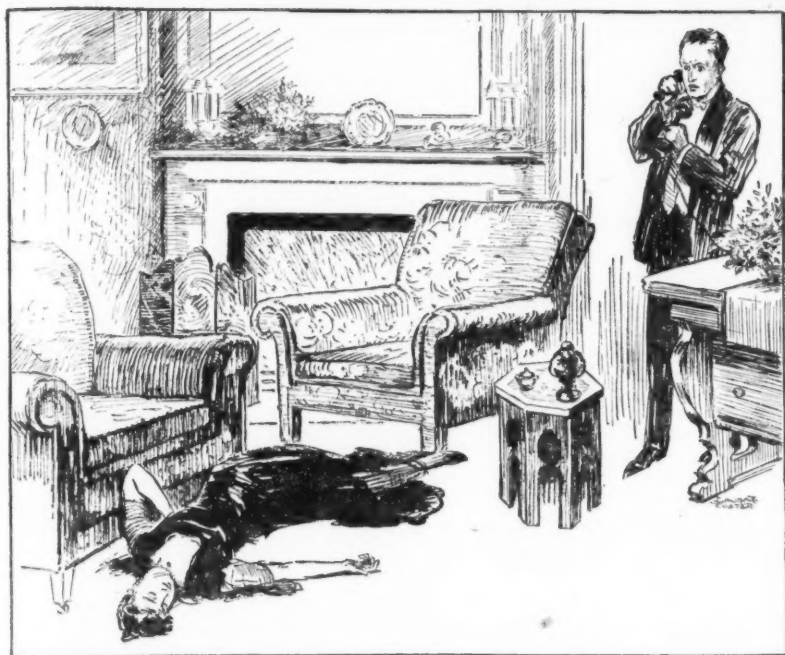
Holden, after a pause, walked over to the instrument and lifted the receiver from its hook.

"Hello!" he said huskily.

"Mr. Holden?" A woman's happy voice vibrated over the wire to him. "Oh, Mr. Holden, I called you up to tell you that my visit this afternoon at your office was all a silly, hasty mistake. Jack—er—Mr. Artwright—has explained everything and, oh, I am so proud of him! To think of their selling their novel even before it was published to the manager of the best theater in town, with the play and the novel coming out together! It will be such a success, I know. I should think you would just die of pride in your wife!"

"My wife!" Holden echoed her stupidly. He watched Lisba coming out of her fainting spell, noted the feeble movement of her hand, the flutter of her heavy lids. "My wife!"

"Yes, your wonderful, famous-to-be wife! To think that she and Jack wrote this novel together without a soul knowing about it! Jack says he always knew she was a genius—that she did more than half the work. And, oh," the happy, incoherent voice rippled on, "Mr. Holden, Jack says he's never going to drink again—that my lesson was a lasting one, for he doesn't want to lose me. So we're going away for our second honeymoon. And, please, Mr. Holden, don't tell your wife how silly I was about those letters—the letters



Holden, after a pause, walked over to the instrument and lifted the receiver from the hook.  
 "Hello!" he said huskily.

that your wife submitted as part of the novel, I mean. Jack says they practically made the novel. Yes, Jack dear, I'm coming. Please congratulate Mrs. Holden for me. Jack says he sent her a message containing news of their sale this afternoon. Oh, yes, and the photograph. Yes, Jack, dear, I *am* coming. The photograph is that of Miss Hillaire Miller, the actress, you know. She's to be their leading woman, I believe, which means success for the play, of course. Yes, Jack. Good-by, Mr. Holden."

As he turned away from the telephone, Holden heard the front doorbell ringing. He felt a vague irritation toward Simpson, the butler. The bell seemed to have been ringing for hours. He himself would go. He went swiftly toward the door, avoiding Lisba as she

lay there on the floor. She was making queer little gasping sounds, now, as if she were trying to cry and did not possess the strength. He met Simpson in the hall and mechanically held out his hand for the package the man was bearing toward the library.

"It is for madame," said Simpson.

"All right," answered Holden stonily.

He could not seem to think clearly. Something awful had happened! What was it? He went back to the library and, remembering suddenly, did not dare to look toward Lisba. He had a horrible fear that she was dead, lying there so motionless on the floor. But he could not look to make sure.

He found that he was opening the package. What was it? The photograph? Oh, no, that had been ex-

plained. The package was a little white box. It contained a pair of baby booties, little blue knitted ones, and pinned on the booties was a note. Holden read it.

It started out abruptly: "Dearest daughter." Holden frowned. Who could that be? Oh, yes, Lisba. "Dearest daughter" was Lisba. That was it. What was that thing he had heard—clever little thing—something about—children—love's gifts—to keep love—a wonder thing. He went on with the note:

DEAREST DAUGHTER: Just met Doctor

Strong, and he told me the glorious news. You cannot know how glad I am for you and Bob, and how proud to think that your dad and I are to be grandparents! I'm sending the first gift for the layette. Lovingly,  
MOTHER.

It was very quiet in the library—just an occasional ember dropping in the fireplace. Then the silence was shattered by a man's laugh, a terrible laugh that turned all at once into hoarse sobs. At last they, too, stopped. And the embers dropped, dropped, until, through the stillness, there came a stir and a sigh.

"Bob?" said Lisba. "Bob dear?"

## BUBBLES

WHAT a wonderful thing it would be," murmured the little girl of his choice, "if these old trees could talk! They could tell me of the lonely walks you have taken in their shadows, the songs you have sung, the little confidences you have given them."

But he, being a man and remembering other nights and other girls, was perfectly satisfied that the Creator left trees speechless.

Even the woman who kept constant vigil before the photograph of a man in uniform can't be depended upon to keep her temper when he comes home and wishes that she could make biscuit like those baked by the camp cook.

The fellow who wrote the most about washing his own clothes will now convince his mother that he was only joking.

Memory is given to the student to enable him to remember the keys by which he gets one hundred in examinations, to the girl to save her from inviting two fellows for the same evening, and to men lest they have no charity for the failings of their sons.

If you remember a man with a little hurt feeling in your heart, you are either still in love with him or ashamed of ever having loved him.

The man who has selected the college to which he will send his son finds it hard to reconcile himself to calling the child "Bessie."

A man will risk his life in No Man's Land to secure a souvenir, and throw it aside an hour later as not worth carrying. A woman will hold a trophy as of little value when she first possesses it, yet risk her life to keep it.

A minister knows woman at her best, yet ministers are often bachelors. A lawyer knows woman at her worst, and lawyers are proverbially shy of the matrimonial noose. A doctor knows her as she is, and doctors always marry.

Woman loves, and converts every moment into a memory. Man loves and, waking the morning after, has forgotten everything.



# WHAT THE STARS SAY



by Madame Renée Longuille

Would you know yourself—your character, your disposition, your traits, your lucky days? Would you know some of the things that are likely to happen to you in the future? If so, you will be interested in following each month Madame Longuille's articles on Astrology.

**B**ETWEEN February 19th and March 20th of every year, the Sun passes through the celestial double-bodied sign Pisces, conferring on all those born at this period a peculiarly intuitive, receptive, and negative condition, which enables them to understand things and sense situations in a totally different way from those born under any other sign of the Zodiac. The typical Pisces man, woman, or child strikes us at once as a most precise, orderly person who hates confusion and can be depended upon to finish any work undertaken to the last possible detail. Where others would be content to view unfinished work or start some new subject while the old was still incomplete, Pisces persons would fret and worry. Until one thing is finished, they will never think of another. Being of this temperament, they are constantly seeking advice from friends and relatives, which advice, however, they usually follow, the opposite trait from that of the Aquarian.



Money matters are always a source of distress to them, and they have a morbid fear of being at some time in want, unless a steady, abundant income

is assured for life. But they have at times a quiet, patient way, and they feel keenly the distress and suffering of all creatures. Often they can be of great consolation to others in need, and their deep understanding and toleration of others' weaknesses makes them very comforting and sympathetic confidants. They can interpret readily the lesson in suffering, and in drawing a real moral from any story, the Pisces person is by far the cleverest to consult. These people are sensitive and impressionable, always reflecting the character of the last person with whom they have been talking, and even little mannerisms of the person will be caught by the Pisces type until he forgets, or is influenced by the next friend.



Natives of this sign are said to be in closer touch with the unseen world than those of any other constellation. Thus they are capable of a religious faith that can overcome almost any obstacle or any amount of suffering. Being a double-bodied sign, there are sometimes two characters trying to be expressed in one, and it is very hard to find a person born at this time who has a definite, clear, marked individ-

uality. Mentally they are likely to be changeable and imaginative, learning not so much from books as from a depth of feeling and strange psychic understandings. If there is one characteristic more pronounced in them than others, it is an extreme love for dumb animals.

They enjoy being on the water, and in making a trip, will always choose a way by water if possible. They are usually good travelers, but have a tendency to anticipate accidents or to spoil their journeys by imagining that every one is trying to hinder their progress or to get the best of them in money matters.



In their homes you will find a well-filled library, and on closer inspection be surprised, perhaps, to learn that the books are mostly romantic novels, for the Pisces native is extremely fond of this kind of literature to satisfy his keen imagination. At times, in conversation, it is a marked failing of these people to pay no attention whatever to the person speaking, and even to interrupt to tell of something entirely foreign to the subject in question.

We all know the type of host or hostess who, without the least seeming effort, has everything complete to welcome a guest. Not the slightest detail has been overlooked for comfort and pleasure. The wardrobe has plenty of hangers, neatly arranged; pins are handy in the pin-cushion; and there are even flowers in the vases, all giving a sense of completeness, of nothing to be desired, as we view the typical Pisces person's guest room. They are also very careful of their clothes and general personal appearance, and can readily detect any flaw or untidiness in others. Their houses are models of order; confusion is a thing unknown. There may not be original ideas or artistic tastes

expressed, but there is finish and polish to everything.

Each sign of the Zodiac is divided into three different types or decanates, and although all three show the characteristics of Pisces, there are different combinations. Those born the last few days of February come under the first type and can be recognized by their steady, quiet, ambitious disposition. To be happy, these people must have a great deal of love and attention bestowed on them. They strive to be good entertainers and usually succeed, but they constantly demand to be the center of attraction.

The second type, or those born in March between the first and tenth, show a more favorable combination of the qualities. They are not so alert or active and do not like to work, this often leading them into mischief, and they become trying, peevish, and fretful. This type of Pisces person, if married, is almost sure to be very unhappy in his domestic life. He never permits duty to interfere with his pleasures—thereby losing many good chances of worldly advancement—and fails in providing for his family. This is rather an unfortunate period of the month to be born, but many of the world's most religious spiritualist mediums have been born at this time.



The third and last type of the sign are more favored, and at all times you will find them busy and industrious, always exploring or investigating mysteries, very often along the line of psychic phenomena. They try to live in a perfect dream world of their own making, which must, of course, circle around them. As they grow more and more important to this dream world and themselves, their fancy and imagination carries them further and further from reality. A really practical person is sel-

dom born in this last third of the sign Pisces.

Physically the constitution of the Pisces person is not overstrong. Worry, restlessness, and anxiety will quickly upset them and cause many kinds of digestive disorders. The most prevalent ailment, however, is consumption, for people born with the Sun in the sign Pisces seem to be more susceptible to this disease than those of the other signs. Then again, there is the dreadful menace of drug habits or intemperance, because the Pisces temperament never makes the least resistance against such evil influences, if it happen to be thrown in their way. This is especially true of those born in the second decanate of the sign. There are often suicidal tendencies shown. Sometimes, if they do not receive help from other planets, there is a liability to tumors or slight blood diseases. It is always extremely beneficial for them to take long ocean voyages, for they are good travelers; even a change of scene will do more for their health than for most others. Their restless disposition necessitates these changes at frequent intervals in their lives to keep the physical machinery in good working order. Thus it is very evident, if they wish to keep good health, that pure conditions, mentally and physically and psychically, must at all times prevail about them.



In employment, Pisces people make successes as bookkeepers, storekeepers, sailors, caterers, and often painters, or in any trade that requires the ability or knack of putting a beautiful or much needed finish to the work. They are most successful, however, as mediums, but this profession they ought to avoid, for the native of Pisces will find this work full of danger.

Deeply emotional, and with a confiding love nature, Pisces natives, when

developed, make faithful, trusting husbands and wives. They will do without things themselves, to give to those whom they love, and even deplete their own vitality by work and care for their families. But with the petty details of domestic life they have no patience, and rebel against having to give an account of themselves, or of their actions, to any one. Very often they make mistakes in marriage, and are exceedingly unhappy. They should be careful to choose a person who can understand and sympathize with this dual and extremely peculiar characteristic. They will probably find their best friends among people born between October 23rd and November 21st.



Many celebrities find their homes in this watery sign. Among the most interesting and best known was George Washington, the first president of our American republic, born February 22nd, just as the Sun was slipping from the sign Aquarius into Pisces. Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Flammarton, and Chopin are other representatives of this sign, whose chief quality is always a desire of complete fulfillment and finish of work that has been previously undertaken.

The ruling planets are Jupiter and Neptune. Their lucky day of the week is Thursday. Soft shades of blue will always harmonize with these natives, who generally have rather light hair and gray, protruding, large eyes. Pisces does not bestow much personal beauty, the Sun having left all the good looks in the sign before. Their faces are usually round and large, with a pale complexion, and the figure is generally thick and oftentimes ill made. They should adorn themselves with pearls whenever possible, for this is their one lucky stone. Mignonette, jessamine,



yellow, and dandelions are their lucky flowers.

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

#### HOROSCOPE OF A. W.

Born March 10, 1880, at 7:15 a. m., Boston, Mass., you had Cancer rising, and the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter in Pisces. This makes you a very strong Pisces person, and the preceding article ought to suit you very well. You are probably not very tall, with a tendency to stoutness, a dull, heavy walk, a round face, and small gray eyes. Mentally, you are rather changeable, fond of novelty, but with good ideas of saving money. The Moon in Pisces, afflicted by Mars, makes your mind sharp and mediumistic, brave and generous. This position threatens injury to your health at certain periods of your life. You may have many psychic experiences. There is danger for you in long voyages across water.

Mercury, the planet of the mind, is in Aries in good aspect to Mars. This again tends to give you splendid mental qualities, and you should make a very clever arithmetician or perhaps chemist, or succeed in any occupation requiring dexterity of hand and sharpness of wit. This position makes you very active, hating laziness and continually scheming or making something. Placed as these planets are in the House of Professions, you will surely follow along one of these lines of work.

Venus is in good aspect to Saturn and promises a steady attachment, denoting care, prudence, chastity, and sincerity. There are indications of unexpected events in connection with marriage or love affairs. You will probably have a small legacy from a woman late in your life.

The planet Jupiter is in a very strong

position, indicating success in your work or profession and the acquisition of money and fame. This position makes you hospitable, philanthropic, and you may associate yourself with societies for the protection of dumb animals. Jupiter is very near the Sun, and this predisposes somewhat to apoplexy.

Saturn in exact parallel to the Sun and the sign Capricorn on the cusp of the House of Marriage would indicate the husband to be somewhat older than you, or it may cause a delay in your marriage. He will be an ambitious man and at times inclined to quarrel with you. He will probably be of middle stature, ruddy complexion, with dark hair and very small eyes.

The Moon by her secondary motion is now passing through your House of Money Affairs and Personal Property, and has been making very favorable aspects with Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury, all three poised in your House of Profession and Trade and Honor, showing that you have been making most wonderful progress in your business this year, and everything you have touched has seemed to turn to gold.

In August of 1919, you will be secretly unhappy over a friend, probably a woman, and concerning money matters, but around your next birthday, March, 1920, you are settled and busy attending to duty and very happy. The year 1921 is a fortunate, busy time. The first of the year you will meet a gentleman who will prove to be a very dear friend. Then, early in the summer of this same year, you take a very important short journey. The good aspect of Mars in the early spring brings you much activity, exercise, and increase in business, good health, and success in general.

*Madame Lonquille will select for publication each month one or two readings of the most interesting horoscopes she casts. If you would like to take a chance upon your own being one of these strongly marked astrological maps, send in the date, and exact hour, if possible, of your birth, together with the place of your birth. Madame Lonquille may choose yours for publication—who knows?*



# The Three-Cornered Kingdom

By  
DuVernet Rabell

Author of "When Satan Was Sick," "His Hour of Freedom," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

**A fascinating, breathless mystery story. If ever high adventure and romance came to a girl, they came to Ruth Townly, entangled in these dramatic European events.**

## WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.

While at school in Paris, Ruth Townly, an American girl, forms a warm friendship with the Princess Oluf of Kosnia. When the two part at graduation, Ruth to return to America and Oluf to assume her crown, Ruth promises that if her friend ever needs her and sends for her, she will leave everything to answer the call. A year later, she receives an urgent message from Oluf, and, with her aunt, starts for Kosnia. On the last stage of the journey, an accident throws her into the hands of a neighbor of Oluf's, young Prince Valdemir of Prebilof, and she is carried to his Castle of Standorf. Here, in spite of her protestations, she is mistaken for the Princess Oluf—a mistake that is fostered by the prince's friend and counselor, the Duke of Wortz—and is held a prisoner under more or less flimsy pretexts, with the object of persuading her to enter into an alliance with Valdemir. Though she is soon deeply in love with the fascinating young prince, she will not acknowledge the fact to herself, and when she discovers a secret passage from the castle, she resolves to make her escape at the first opportunity.

**I** WASTED no time after this, but slipped into the hall. Then, in the passage, a sudden apprehension assailed me. I felt sure I could open the panel, but what if I found the passage occupied as before? The Duke of Wortz wouldn't be there. He was away again—

Suddenly I stopped. Nothing could suit me better. The duke was small—so was I. In case a guard was stationed in the passage, dressed in the uniform of the Duke of Wortz, if the light were dim, I had a chance to slip through.

The Duke of Wortz's apartments were in the same wing as my own. I found them without trouble—and discovered that the door was locked. I might have expected this, but I nearly cried with vexation as I turned away from the door. I walked slowly along the hall, wondering if I had better risk flight dressed as I was—in a low-necked gown with merely a chiffon scarf over my bare shoulders.

At the end of the hall along which I was walking was a window. As I paused for an instant to stare moodily

**The first installment of this story appeared in the February number of SMITH'S.**

out, I noticed a stone balustrade that ran along outside the windows. In one direction it ran outside my rooms, and in the other direction—my heart began to beat joyously—it extended under the windows of the Duke of Wortz's apartments!

In a moment I was out on the balcony and standing before the windows of the duke's rooms. I tried each one hopefully, but of course they were locked. I wouldn't, however, let this deter me now. I swung the heavy jeweled girdle of my dress and broke the glass above the lock. Then, working with as much speed as I could, I finally opened the window and stepped over the sill.

This wing of the castle had been modernized in every way. Prince Valdemir had told me of his almost insurmountable difficulties in making these quarters fit to live in, and now I blessed him, as I felt along the wall for the electric switch and turned on the lights. I drew the heavy hangings before the windows and listened intently. Then I set to work with furious speed.

Less than fifteen minutes after I had entered the rooms, I stood before the mirror for a quick look at myself. Well, we might have been the same size, but the duke's uniform certainly did not look as if it had been made for me. But I put what faith I could in a long military cape which I swung from my shoulders and wrapped about me.

I pulled the wide brim of the duke's hat low over my eyes, and turned up the high collar of the cape, so that only my eyes were visible, and stepped out into the corridor. Two maids scurried by me with downcast eyes; in the lower hall I met four of the guards, with an officer going on night duty. They came to attention and saluted, and I gravely raised my hand in return.

Once in the armor room, I flashed my electric torch on the right-hand wall and had no difficulty at all in locating the

panel. I pressed my hand against it and uttered a desperate little prayer. It moved, and slowly swung open.

I ran down the few steps. Then I heard a noise. I hesitated and hurriedly retraced my steps, forgetting my confidence in the duke's uniform. I put my hand on the panel at the top of the stairs and pushed. It would not move. I pushed again frantically, and then tried to push it the other way—first to the right and then up and down, while my heart beat in my throat and ice-cold fingers played a devil's tattoo up and down my spine. But the door was firm. Somewhere inside the armor room the secret panel had caught. I was locked down in the secret passage. There was nothing left for me to do but go on. All the joyous excitement of my adventure died within me and with it my malicious thrill of pride and vengeance at tricking Prince Valdemir, who had been so sure that I was securely in his power. I drew a long, unsteady breath and rose from my knees. I went down the steps again—but this time I could not run.

Once at the bottom, however, I tried to step out jauntily, flashing my torch from side to side, but my breath would come in short, panting gasps, and my steps would falter from time to time. It was very damp and dim down there in the passage, and cold and very gloomy. Here and there the walls dripped, and I stepped over pools of stagnant water, and in that gravelike silence, the dripping water sounded like pistol shots. Once I heard a squeak and the scratching scurry of little feet. I frantically swung my light about, but I couldn't see anything. It was fortunate that I couldn't. At sight of a rat, I should probably have died on the spot.

After a time, when I felt sure that I had walked miles, a cool little breeze began to fan my cheeks. It came from straight ahead. I quickened my steps,

with a sigh of relief, as, far ahead, I saw a gray, blurred outline marking the end of the first stage of my journey.

I had all but reached the entrance when I stopped suddenly. Then I took two or three instinctive steps backward. Voices were coming out of the distance ahead of me—two voices. Contrary to my hopes, there was evidently a guard placed at the outer edge of the secret passage. I was to meet my first obstacle. But it need not be an obstacle, I argued reassuringly to myself. If I had passed muster as the Duke of Wortz in the lighted halls of Standorf, what had I to fear in the dark, illy lit entrance ahead of me? But what if I were questioned? It wasn't likely, but if I were, I simply would not answer at all. I would just raise my hand in a haughty gesture and go my way in dignified silence. I took a deep breath and prepared to carry out my intention. Setting my shoulders into the little duke's swagger, I walked bravely along, listening to the voices ahead of me.

They were talking French—that is, a sort of provincial French, not the incomprehensible tongue I had heard among the guards at Standorf. This was strange, but there was no sense in being panic-stricken at hearing a tongue I could at least partly understand. I braced myself against the chill of the unexpected and began to listen intently. Before they had spoken ten words, I had heard enough absolutely to freeze the blood around my heart. One of the men asked what time it was—and then added that the duke should be here now!

I nearly fainted. The Duke of Wortz was apparently expected at any moment, and here I had been expecting to swagger past those two guards in his uniform, confident of arousing no suspicion! Merciful heavens, it was well for me I had paused when I did! Coming from the secret passage, when I should have been coming from the op-

posite direction, would have rendered my chance of escape pathetically slim.

A humiliating picture began to unroll before my eyes. I saw myself dragged into the presence of Prince Valdemir—in the uniform of the Duke of Wortz! I saw his stare of surprise, and then the dawn of an odious smile of triumph. No, decidedly the game was not finished, and under the present circumstances, it certainly looked like a grand slam for the prince. I made up my mind then and there that anything was better than running the risk of capture, and I began to retrace my steps with all possible speed.

I had almost reached the other end of the passage before I remembered the closed panel at the head of the stairs, but I kept on running. Perhaps fate would be kind to me—perhaps, before, I had not pressed the panel at just the right angle. This time I must do better—I *must*. This time—I stopped abruptly and listened.

From somewhere in front of me, my terror-sharpened ears caught the sound of footsteps. Some one was coming toward me down the secret passage!

I took my finger off the button of my torch and stood rigid in the darkness. My brain worked desperately, seeking some way of escape. I could not go back—there were the guards; I could not go forward—there was that unknown some one coming toward me. I was fairly trapped.

Then I snatched at a ray of hope. Was the passage wide enough, was I small enough, to have the man coming toward me pass without discovering me? Whoever it was approaching from the direction of Standorf knew the passage well. He walked rapidly—and, thank Heaven, he carried no light!

I gathered my cape tightly about me and flattened myself against the wall. I scarcely dared to breathe, but then I was scarcely able to breathe. The man was almost upon me now. He came



As I passed, the castle guard, drawn up at attention, fell in behind me and followed me down the corridor.

nearer—he all but passed me—and then he stumbled! He flung out his hand to save himself and caught my cape. He uttered a startled exclamation. There was a moment of absolute silence, and then he grasped my arms. I fought with a kind of desperation, and was gradually twisting myself free when my captor called:

take our prisoner to one of the old cells."

Good heavens—where were they going to take me? I had read of these dungeons in the old feudal castles in many a tale of romance, with fascinated, shivering interest, but goodness knows I had never thought to know anything of them from personal experience.

"Dielet! Sergius!"

There was the sound of running feet from the entrance of the passage. The guards arrived upon the scene, and the struggle was over.

"A light—have you a light, your grace?"

"No."

I recognized the voice of the Duke of Wortz, but before I could cry out—and I wasn't at all sure that I wanted to cry out—a heavy cloth was pressed over my mouth.

"No light is necessary," the duke went on; then added sharply: "Come, we have no time to lose. Sergius, get back to your post. Dielet, come with me. We will

I was hurried along in absolute darkness, and we turned first one corner and then another that I did not remember having seen as I had come down the passage alone. We stopped, and I heard the duke fumble at a heavy door. It opened, and I was pushed inside with scant ceremony. My gag was loosened, the door shut, and a heavy bar clanged down into place.

Well, here I was. Oh, why had I assumed that the Duke of Wortz was entering Standorf by way of the secret passage? With nothing to go on, I had jumped to this conclusion. If I had only gone on past those guards, I might have been out in the open by now. What would have become of me then I could not guess, but anything would have been better than this.

As my captors moved away, I heard the guards say something about the removal of my gag. The duke laughed shortly.

"Oh, let him shout if he can," he said. "There's no one to hear him but the rats!"

The first thing I did was to tear frantically at the cloth about my face, but the last echo of my captors' footsteps had almost died away before I succeeded in removing it. The echoes died away into silence, and I was left to myself, with only my dreary thoughts for company. There was a heavy, musty odor in the air, and far, far below me somewhere, I heard the sound of running water.

I began to think it a very strange thing that I should be locked away in this lonely, out-of-the-way dungeon, instead of being taken directly to the prince. I thought of the duke's indifference concerning the identity of his prisoner, and the more I pondered, the more mystifying it became.

But shortly I had other thoughts to distract me. The whys and wherefores of my predicament were all very well, but the predicament itself now be-

gan to occupy my mind to the exclusion of all else. Here I was locked away in a dungeon, buried deep below the castle of Standorf, miles from the sound of human voice. I was cold, and I muffled my hands in my cape to keep them warm.

The sound of the water running below began to transform itself into a monotonous chant, and somewhere out in the passage a sobbing wind rose to a poignant moan and died away in a whisper far off in the distance. I thought of the "Prisoner of Chillon" and, entirely without any conscious volition on my part—such a selection being the last one I should consider likely to elevate the spirits—my lips began to form the heart-rending words, "Seven pillars—and seven chains—" I found that I knew it, to the bitter, despairing end. Why, I thought indignantly, had they ever forced light-hearted, happy schoolgirls to commit such a depressing thing to memory?

Then my thoughts went further. Why had my father sent me to Madame Manonne's in the first place? And why, when there, had I made Princess Oluf the friend of my soul? And, granting this as inevitable, why, oh, why had I ever come to visit her in her wretched three-cornered kingdom? I wished fervently that I had never heard of Kosnia!

The wind came creeping down the passage again, like a wandering wraith, and its voice was that of the wind whispering over the dried grasses of a grave. My nerves began to quiver into frightened life, and my throat felt choked with sand, and my forehead grew damp under my hair. The cut on my head burned and throbbed, and I became conscious that I was very, very tired.

A great deal had happened to me since dinner, and it could not be much after midnight now. But I felt as if I had lived a century in two hours.



I had been standing still with my back against the cold stone wall, and now, just beside me, I heard a squeak, and the unmistakable skitter of little feet. Then I remembered the duke's words about the rats. My heart was beating in my throat, but I caught at my reeling senses. Perhaps, if I were noisy enough, I could keep them away. I simply would not scream, so I began to sing. I went through my entire repertoire of songs, and then began on the national anthem.

I stopped. There was not a sound—at first; and then a rat squeaked again—another answered from the corner—and another from the door. I screamed now. I beat on the door, and I kicked it with my thin satin slippers; I gave my entire conscientious attention to making myself heard in the castle above. There was no result, and I paused from utter exhaustion.

My throat had swollen and almost closed. I found, when I tried to speak, that I could scarcely raise my voice above a whisper. I leaned against the wall and closed my eyes; I thought of my home; I thought of the night the *Mauretania* had sailed from New York; I thought of Aunt Ollie and dear old father. I wondered what they were thinking about me.

The tears were running down my cheeks, and I sank into a despairing heap on the floor. There was a long silence, and I must have relaxed into a state either of sleep or semiconsciousness. I was dreaming, and in my dreams— Suddenly my eyes flew open, and an ice-cold wave swept over me and left me shuddering and breathless. A rat had run across my clasped hands! I sprang to my feet.

"Valdemir!" I cried his name without any intention at all.

Almost as if my desperate cry had been a word of magic, the heavy door swung open.

"Your highness called me?"

I am quite sure his voice would have turned me back from the gates of heaven. I sprang forward and threw myself on his breast. I clasped convulsive hands about his neck and cried without restraint—relieved sobs that shook my whole body and seemed to tear it to pieces. Then my sobs became laughter, and swept back again to hysterical weeping. Still I clung to my deliverer, who held me quietly, saying nothing, simply waiting until my paroxysm had passed. Finally I stopped, with a deep, shuddering breath.

"You are better?" he asked.

I could only nod.

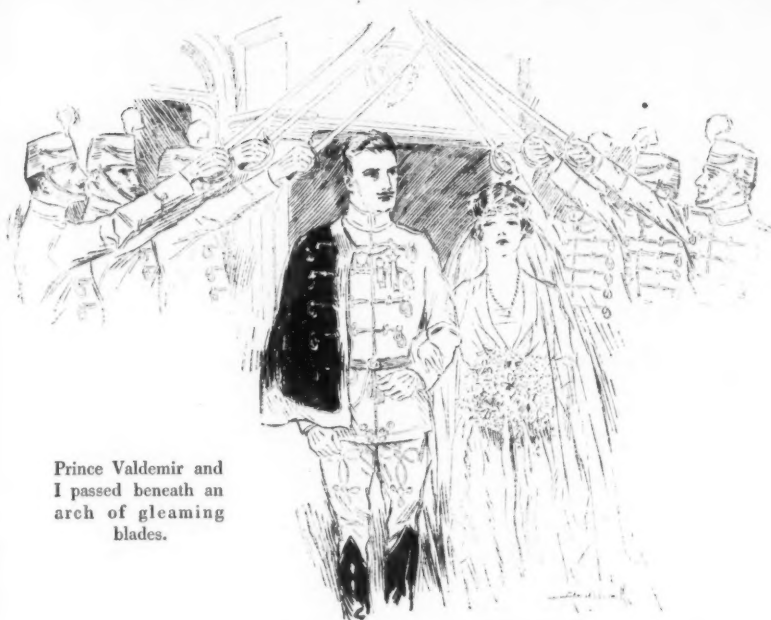
"Can you walk—or shall I carry you?"

I took a few uncertain steps, and Prince Valdemir placed his arms about me. So, half leading, half supporting me, he led me back through the passages, up the stone steps, through the armory, and into my own apartment.

He asked no questions, made no comments, and his silence, far from assuring me, flayed my already tortured nerves back into a state of quivering fear. I had simply gone to pieces. There was none of my defiance, none of my bravado left. If he had planned to break my spirit, he seemed to have been successful.

Sister Ursula met us at the door of my rooms. She stepped back, and the prince picked me up and placed me on my bed and threw my cape over me. Then they both left the room.

The door had hardly closed upon them when Gretta appeared. I closed my eyes, but they opened again at once. I had expected to sink immediately into a sleep of utter exhaustion, but, to my surprise, I did nothing of the sort. I was acutely conscious of everything that went on about me, and watched Gretta with an intense, although impersonal, interest. The little maid kept bustling in and out of the room, with her arms heaped high, and wearing an



Prince Valdemir and  
I passed beneath an  
arch of gleaming  
blades.

air of suppressed excitement. She opened closets and chests and she handled the things she took from them with a breathless care. Once she glanced toward the bed, with an expression of awed curiosity in her eyes, and then began to lay the most wonderful garments on the couch, the chairs, and the table—white shimmering things, lingerie made entirely of lace, ivory-buckled white satin slippers and finally, taking it reverently from its swathings of linens, a wonderful robe, glistening with pearls and heavy with magnificent embroidery.

She came to the bedside.

"May it please your highness to rise? We have but little time."

I shook my head.

"I couldn't get up. Why, I can hardly move!"

She bent over the table beside my bed.

"Drink this, your highness. It will

give you strength." And at my questioning look: "It is a wonderful cordial made by the good fathers at the monastery on the mountain."

I sipped the wine. It was as red as the heart of a ruby, and heavy, and cloyingly sweet, but it ran through my veins like liquid fire, and almost at once I sat up on the edge of the bed and looked curiously at the things about me. I had such an odd feeling—not exactly of light-headedness—not of dizziness—but one-half of me seemed to sit there curiously, interested in the things about me, while the other half seemed to lie frozen and still in some remote corner of my being.

"What are all these clothes for?" I asked.

"I am commanded not to talk about them, your highness. Will you stand now and let me dress you?"

"But not in those clothes! Surely they are not for me!" I protested.

But I stood docilely enough, while Gretta's deft fingers began to fly over me. I even laughed faintly when she frowned and made little clucking noises like a disturbed hen over the complicated fastenings of the duke's uniform. I had a marvelous bath, with rose leaves floating about on the surface of the water, and I pressed the fragrant petals against my eyelids and over my lips. My head was swimming when I stepped into my bedroom, but Gretta seemed to expect this, and flew to my side with more wine and a crystal flask, which she pressed to my nostrils and which carried all the sweet scents of Araby. I could feel my eyes brighten and the blood begin to glow in my cheeks.

Finally I was ready. Gretta led me to the long mirror and switched on the great prism chandelier over my head. As I looked into the glass, I gasped, and a little thrill, almost of pleasure, ran over me. I was dressed in white from my head to my heels, and as I stood there gazing at my reflected image, the queerest thought came to me—I almost spoke it aloud.

"If you have never before in your life been beautiful," my subconscious self said to that other self, who was shrinking off in the corner of my soul, "you are beautiful now. Come out and look. You will never be so fair again."

"Your highness is pleased?" Gretta ventured timidly, kneeling at my feet and spreading out the train of my gown like a great silvery fan upon the rug.

"I look—why, Gretta, I look like a bride!" I hardly knew my own voice when I heard it—it seemed to come from miles away.

At this moment Sister Ursula appeared. She held in her hands a piece of lace as fine as the veils wrought on the looms of the fairies that I used to believe I should find if I searched the garden while the dew was yet on the grass. She stepped behind me and

placed it on my head and bound it into place with a band of pearls that encircled my head and fastened under my chin. Then she slipped her cool fingers beneath the folds and drew out a curl of my hair on each side.

"You are lovelier than any bride Prebilof has ever seen," she said.

I looked at her, trying to formulate some plan of action. Why—I was going to be married! But of course it couldn't go on! But what could I do? What was more—what did I *want* to do? Then, like an exhausted person dropping a weight that he knows he should bear, but cannot carry another instant, my mind refused to consider the situation and relaxed. I was tired—oh, so very tired!

Gretta led me to the door. As I reached the threshold, I turned and sought Sister Ursula's eyes. There was something I wanted to say. I had it; then it seemed to drift away from me before it reached my lips.

"My—my mother—" I whispered, and raised my hand to brush away the hot tears that seemed to burn my cheeks.

Sister Ursula bent forward and kissed my forehead.

"Your mother, my child, will stand beside you at the altar."

Gretta fell on her knees and caught my hand.

"May God bless your highness and bring you happiness!"

In the hall I was met by the castle guard, drawn up at attention, who, as I passed, fell in behind me and followed me down the corridor. They were dressed in the splendid uniform of Prince Valdemir's royal hussars. As I walked along, a whimsical thought came into my mind. What I was going through wasn't real at all—none of it had been real; it was merely a fantastic sort of dream—quite interesting and exciting when you once made up your mind to it as that. These tall,

good-looking soldiers, in their white-and-silver uniforms, in their high, shining boots and flat, patent-leather hats with crescents shining on them—they were not real.

I was conducted to the little chapel in the north wing. Here were more guards—more than I had known were in the castle. There were four white-robed priests standing in front of the high altar, on which many candles burned. And at the foot of the broad steps stood Prince Valdemir, dressed in a magnificent uniform, with half a dozen orders across his breast. And my heart gave a sudden quick leap as my eyes fell upon him.

My guards fell back on either side and left me standing there alone, and an officer stepped forward and pressed an ivory-bound prayer book into my hand. I glanced at him, and saw with a dull sort of surprise that it was the Duke of Wortz, and that he was smiling, and his narrow little eyes were full of triumph. What part was he playing in my dream?

From somewhere over my head I heard the strains of an organ, like angels singing as they flew upward toward heaven, their voices swelling and bursting into deep, golden harmony.

I walked slowly down the aisle and placed my ice-cold hand in that of Prince Valdemir, as he stepped forward to meet me.

The service began. I don't know what language it was in. I heard very little of it. The whole thing was a dream through which my mind wandered. I nodded twice when the prince pressed my hand, and dazedly repeated after him responses which I was faintly surprised to hear him make in English.

What were these vows I was making before God? But my wonder, my fear, died away almost at once, like the glow from graying embers, and my mind drifted off again on its journey through space. A ring was placed on

my finger, and Prince Valdemir repeated some half dozen words, bending his head slightly. Then I was kneeling, with Valdemir's arm encircling my waist. We arose, and I was hotly conscious of his kiss upon my lips.

We turned from the altar. The officers of the guard lined up on either side of the chapel aisle. They drew their swords with a swish of steel, and Prince Valdemir and I passed beneath an arch of gleaming blades.

Sister Ursula met me at the chapel door, and Valdemir placed my hand in hers.

In my room, she slipped off my wedding gown, and it heaped about my feet like drifts of ice-incrusted snow. She threw a crêpe something about my shoulders and drew a chair forward. I sank into it and leaned my head against the back.

It seemed that my eyes had hardly closed when the door opened behind me and there was a quick step. A sudden feeling of panic made me spring to my feet.

Prince Valdemir stood behind me, and as I turned, he caught me in his arms with a quick cry. I raised my head and looked up at him. And I hated him! He was so triumphantly sure of himself—and of me! So sure of the mastery which he felt had dominated me!

His hand found mine, and he pressed his lips to the finger that wore the wedding ring.

A wave of fiery fury seemed to sweep me from head to foot. I looked at him, my eyes burdened with all the flaming hatred that was seething in my soul. I drew that gold band from my finger and, still keeping my eyes on his, dropped it to the floor with a long shiver.

His arms loosened. He stepped back, keeping his eyes fixed on my face. Then a new look dawned in his eyes. First it was pain, dull, seemingly dazed; then

came bewilderment; then anger flared for an instant; and then slowly grew a look of horror. He turned and walked blindly toward the door, both his hands held before him like a man who has lost his way.

I was still standing where he had left me when the room became the scene of the wildest activity. I looked on, but without much understanding. My brain had endured its limit—it refused to register another impression. I remember being dressed—and in my own black taffeta frock, the one I had worn the night of my arrival at Standorf. A long cape was wrapped about me, and the fur collar turned up about my ears, and I was hurried down into the courtyard. Here the walls looked grayer and grimmer than ever in the weird light that precedes the dawn. A motor stood at the great gate, its engine throbbing, and beside it Prince Valdemir—he stands out clearly enough—talking to the driver.

He turned and came slowly forward to meet me, his hands thrust into the pockets of his coat, and as he looked down at me, all hell seemed burning in his eyes. He bowed, a deep, ironical bow, and I raised my head and forced my eyes to meet his.

"Your highness," he said slowly, "I give you your freedom." Then suddenly he laughed, and all the demons in the nether world laughed in his voice. "Some day I may claim my bride, and you will come back—willingly!"

"Never that!" I cried with sudden passion.

"Then"—his eyes narrowed, and his voice grew stern—"say good-by forever to Standorf—and to me!"

He lifted me into the waiting motor, and it turned out of the great gates and down the long, winding mountain road, gathering speed, it seemed to me, with every foot. We raced through villages, and the echoes of barking dogs followed our flight. I sat huddled up in the seat,

my face buried to the eyes in my high fur collar, and watched the rising sun redden the ridges of pine. More villages, and finally a large town, where we drew up at the railroad station. I thought dully that it must be Voltein.

I remember a railroad train, whose rumble seemed only to echo the rumble in my head. After about an hour, the train stopped and there was an interminable wait, and the sun rose fully, and it grew quite warm. When we finally went on again, I saw that I was surrounded by soldiers wearing different uniforms from those of the guard who had left Voltein with me; and their language was different, softer, although it was as incomprehensible to me as the other. I wondered without much interest where they were taking me. I wished I could sleep—faint—anything to stop this maddening rumble in my head.

Then the train came to a slow stop, and a tall, kindly-faced man entered the compartment and held out his hand to assist me from the car. As I stepped to the platform and looked about me, my heart leaped into my throat, and I gave a glad cry. I saw Oluf—and I ran forward to reach her before she should vanish, as I feared she might. I couldn't let this be a dream. Then I heard Aunt Ollie's voice—she kissed me—and when I heard her words, I knew my dream was over:

"For goodness' sakes, Ruth, where did you get that smart cape? And I never saw that fur before. It's the same tone as sable, but the fur is longer."

I began to laugh, and only the tranquil light in Oluf's eyes, her cool hands holding mine reassuringly, her wonderful soft voice reiterating over and over again that I was all right, kept me from having hysterics again.

It is truly remarkable what the human brain, the human body, and incidentally the human heart, can endure in

the way of harrowing experiences and yet come back to normal and resume its everyday functions with more or less regularity. By noon that day, I was sitting up in bed drinking hot chocolate and listening to Oluf's eager questions, which Aunt Ollie kept adding to every other second.

Of course, if I had had time to think the whole thing over, to formulate some plan of action, or, rather, to plan just what I was going to tell of my adventures in Standorf, everything would have been different, and all of us would have been spared a lot. But after I had related what had happened to me up to that last night, when I had told of my attempted escape, I just couldn't go on. Can you really blame me? How could I tell of my marriage, when the last words of the man who had married me had practically been that he never intended to see me again? Instead, when I came to that part, I told Oluf that the rest of the story would have to be her task. Prince Valdemir had given me my freedom—and doubtless she could explain this better than I could.

"And what of your own affairs, Oluf? What of the aid that I traveled halfway across the world to bring you? Am I too late?"

She shook her fair head and smiled sadly.

"I'm afraid so. But don't look like that, little one. Perhaps the end would have been the same in any event."

"Tell me," I begged.

"My people have never really had confidence in me," Oluf began slowly, "and my ministers always doubted whether or no in a crisis I should be able to rise to it. When I wrote you, things had come to an almost desperate pass. Dalberg grew more threatening every day. Something had to be done to check her. Russia must be asked to intervene. But to ask intervention openly would have been unwise. If I

called in the assistance of a great power at the first sign of trouble, would not that have a disquieting effect on my people? My councilors felt that it would be little short of disastrous. Then I thought of your father and the influence he wields at the Russian court. I couldn't write you this—the details were too numerous and too dangerous. I had to see you. And time counted."

"And I am too late," I said sadly.

"No—not too late. Aid came to us from another quarter. Masvania became suddenly very desirous of a marriage between Prince Gregory and myself. In the last week, they have become most pressing. Nothing has been decided yet, but the project is looked on with favor. The joint kingdom of Masvania and Kosnia would be safe from the threats of Dalberg."

"But, Oluf, *must* you marry Prince Gregory? Why not a treaty?"

"I begged for that, but my chancellor says no. But—I have still some days of grace. The emissaries from Masvania do not arrive until next week."

She didn't seem to want to talk about this any more, so I began to question what had taken place when my disappearance had been discovered.

It seems that when I left Aunt Ollie sitting by the road that night, she waited with what patience she might for my return. But when she had eaten all the sandwiches and drunk all the coffee, she became cold and frightened, Aunt Ollie's physical comfort being in very sympathetic accord with her mental state. She called at first, but the sound of her voice woke so many echoes that she became afraid even to whisper.

Before she determined what to do, the driver returned. I feel that I missed a great deal by not being present at the dialogue that followed between the frantic Aunt Ollie and the highly excited driver. How Aunt Ollie ultimately made him understand about my disappearance I can't imagine, but she





I was sitting up in bed, drinking hot chocolate and listening to Oluf's eager questions.

did. They searched for over an hour with no success. Once they heard the sound of a motor, but before they could locate it, it had flashed into view around the corner and disappeared in a cloud of dust. Just think how near I had been to them!

At last Aunt Ollie came to the conclusion that there was nothing left for them to do but go on. Once she found herself driven into thinking for herself, she seems to have risen to the occasion

with surprising efficiency. She got into communication with the authorities in Kosnia and went on to Galtek. Oluf was frantic, and for two days endeavors were made to locate the missing Ruth Townly. Then Aunt Ollie, in fear and trembling, cabled father. And can't you just see father?

Then news of me came to Galtek in the form of a message from Prince Valdemir of Prebilof. He wrote that he had been shut up in his castle at Standorf,

a prisoner, because of the floods. He stated that he had as his guest a young girl, whom he had picked up unconscious on the road to Voltein, and he presumed that she was the missing young American, Ruth Townly. He made no mention, however, of my restoration to Kosnia.

Aunt Ollie ceased having hysterics and immediately cabled father; but Oluf, while she did not mention it to Aunt Ollie, could not completely share her relief. Rumor was rife in Kosnia concerning this wild young Prince of Prebilof, and Oluf was more than a little apprehensive concerning my welfare.

She wrote an immediate reply to Prince Valdemir, confirming his suppositions as to my identity, and stated in no uncertain terms that Valdemir, and the people of Prebilof itself, would be held directly responsible for my well-being and safe-conduct to Kosnia.

Then came the midnight message asking that an escort meet me at the frontier, and there the story ended—except for some details which Oluf seemed anxious that I should add.

But I was not overly anxious to add them. What Oluf had told me complicated, instead of clearing up, the situation. I had learned one thing, however—Prince Valdemir had been under no misapprehension as to the true identity of his guest—or prisoner—at Standorf. His note to Kosnia made that clear enough. So he had believed me that first morning, after all; or, if not then, when had he discovered that I was not the Princess Oluf? Perhaps the Duke of Wortz told him. I could well believe that that unpleasant little man would do a trick like that! And if he knew that I was not the Princess Oluf, why on earth had Prince Valdemir married me?

Here my heart gave a guilty little jump. Perhaps he loved me. But then I laughed scornfully at myself. I was

familiar enough with European history to know how small a part love plays in most royal marriages. The more I thought, the more of a nest of riddles my mind became. Only Prince Valdemir could really straighten matters out—and the prospect of his doing so was certainly not immediate. "Then say good-by forever to Standorf—and to me!" Had he meant it? As I thought of the expression in his eyes, the tone of his voice, I knew he had.

But—here I started in dismay—this being so, what on earth was going to be the outcome of my marriage? I couldn't keep it a secret forever. I wondered if I had better tell Oluf everything. I could just see myself announcing dramatically: "And then we were married!" And would I be allowed to write "finis" here? Not a chance in the world! Oluf was a woman. She would allow no love story to end so. And what was the end? It made pretty telling—didn't it?—reduced to words: "Then the prince seemingly repented of his bargain and sent me away."

No, it couldn't be done. Confidences were decidedly not in order at present. The rôle of "deserted at the altar" made no appeal to me. I lifted my chin. Very well, if Prince Valdemir chose to play a waiting game, I could play it myself; if it was a matter of "passing the buck," to use a term of father's, two could do that. It was a week before a possible explanation of my marriage presented itself—and then it was far from satisfactory, especially to my vanity.

"Tell me something about this Prince Valdemir," Oluf asked me one day, as we sat on the terrace having tea. Aunt Ollie was working on some lace, a new accomplishment that she had acquired since her stay in Kosnia, and Oluf was sitting smiling at me from behind the great golden tea service. "Is he such a terrible monster?" she added.

"Oh, not at all," I answered. "He's precisely what you would expect him to be when you consider his upbringing, his environment, and his good looks."

"Ah—he is handsome, then?"

"He is—and apparently well enough aware of it. I can well believe the tales of his fascinations, though. I dare say women spoil him to death."

"You seem to have made fair use of your time at Standorf, judging from your observations," Aunt Ollie remarked. She was about to add more, but she dropped a stitch and had to give her work her entire attention.

"Yes—you must have seen something of this wild young neighbor of mine. Just what did you do with yourself all day, Ruth? How did you spend your time?"

"Oh, I read and sewed," I answered evasively, "and I talked politics with Sister Ursula."

"But you were in Standorf for almost a week," Oluf persisted. "Surely, in that time, you must have seen a good deal of Prince Valdemir."

I laughed.

"Oh, of course I saw him occasionally. One day he took me motoring—and I taught him the fox trot."

Aunt Ollie dropped her lace, and Oluf, after one surprised glance, threw back her fair head with a ripple of laughter.

"Well, I felt as if I ought to do something in return for the motor ride," I argued defensively. "And then, you know, I hoped he might ask me again."

"And did he?" Aunt Ollie asked eagerly.

"He did not."

"But, *chérie*," Oluf began again, with a sort of sweet persistence that I somehow felt vaguely disconcerting, "how could he have taken you motoring? He wrote the river had risen."

"Well, the river went down—no, they built a bridge— Oh, I don't know how it was, exactly," I declared petu-

lantly. "I was glad enough to go. I wasn't asking the whys and wherefores."

I could feel Oluf's eyes upon me, and when I stole a glance in her direction, I found that they were filled with a sort of introspective curiosity. I hastily buried myself in the history of Kosnia that lay in my lap. But I didn't read much; Oluf's attitude bothered me. That's the way with these reserved people. They sit on the side lines of life, and think about the things their eyes have looked upon—and you never know when they're going to come to conclusions of startling accuracy.

Despite the tenseness of the political situation in Kosnia, or perhaps because of it, life was very gay at Oluf's court. In the days that followed, there were balls and dinners and charming little informal dances in Oluf's own drawing-room. The Russian-opera company was in Kosnia, and it was very impressive in the royal box when the orchestra played the national anthem on Oluf's entrance, and the people all rose to their feet and cheered. Aunt Ollie was in her element, gossiping with countesses, exchanging embroidery stitches with duchesses, and all the time looking over the marriageable members of Oluf's court with calculating, matchmaking eyes. I let her do it—let her discuss court etiquette, precedent, and all that sort of thing. What was the use of disturbing her dream until I had to?

Oluf didn't seem very happy. One day she would seem willing, even eager, to discuss her affairs, talk of her possible marriage with Prince Gregory, and the next, her eyes would fill with tears at the mere mention of it.

"Do you know Gregory very well?" I asked her one day, when she seemed in a communicative frame of mind.

She shook her head.

"Not very well. We have exchanged visits. I met him once in St. Petersburg—that is all."

"Do you like him?"

Oluf lifted her shoulder.

"How can I tell? He seemed agreeable enough."

"But, Oluf," I persisted, "could you ever learn to like him better? My goodness, think of marrying a man you scarcely know! Suppose he didn't improve on acquaintance—and most men don't."

"How wise we are!" Oluf laughed. Then she added seriously, "My choice will hardly be consulted in a matter as important as this. The good of my country is all that will be considered. When royalty comes a-courting, dear little Ruth, it isn't a matter of whether or no you love your prospective husband."

"Um. Well, if you don't love Prince Gregory, you take my advice and don't marry him. Marriage is bad enough when you do love a man."

"But—why, my dear child," Oluf asked, apparently amazed, "what on earth can you know about that?"

"This is the day of free speech," I answered airily. "It is now considered smart to hang your family linen on the community clothesline."

"In marriage," Oluf observed sagely, "it is not the experience of others that helps us—it's our own that counts. Oh," she went on drearily, "I know I must face it some day. But Gregory—" She paused and sighed.

"Oh, well," I consoled her—there seemed to be no use in this continual flapping of ravens' wings—"oh, well, most young princes are wild, but sometimes they settle down and make good husbands."

"I don't want a good husband!" Oluf wailed. "I only want a consort who will guarantee the good of Kosnia, and help me keep my people happy and prosperous! But," she concluded, "*que voulez-vous, chérie?* If I don't marry Gregory, I shall have to marry Prince Valdemir. My choice is limited."

I all but jumped.

"Has Prince Valdemir asked you?"

"No—up to this time Valdemir has displayed a marked unwillingness to marry any one. I have heard that an alliance with Kosnia has been broached to him on more than one occasion, and he either flies into a violent rage or laughs at his ministers. Not very flattering, is it?"

There! Suddenly it came to me why Valdemir had married me. He had not wanted to marry Oluf—although why, I couldn't tell—and a marriage with me would tide him over, for a time at least. And as I accepted this solution of the question that had addled my brain for days, a wave of ice-cold rage swept over me. Then I became conscious that Oluf was speaking:

"Of course ultimately he will be forced to a decision. The needs of his people demand an advantageous alliance."

I sat there thoughtfully while Oluf wandered restlessly about the room.

"Well," I remarked finally, "I haven't seen Prince Gregory, Oluf, but let me tell you this—Prince Valdemir would make anything but a good husband, or consort, or whatever it is you're looking for. He's proud and headstrong and has the devil's own temper and a nasty habit of losing it when you disagree with him. You would never be allowed a word in the governing of your own country. You needn't laugh—what I say is true."

"I wasn't laughing, dear," Oluf hastened to say, "I was listening to your pearls of wisdom. Do go on."

I was perfectly willing to.

"My dear, that gay young man would spend his time falling in and out of love with all your pretty ladies in waiting. I'll wager Henry the Eighth had nothing on him. Why, he might end by beheading you!"

Oluf seemed utterly unimpressed. She actually laughed.

"Oh, I really shouldn't like that!"

"Oh, well, if you think it's a joke!" I said resentfully.

"I don't, indeed. What you've told me makes me quite determined to marry Gregory. And then, together, we will make war on this imperious neighbor of ours. Who knows? We may overthrow his kingdom and drive him into exile!"

I rose.

"You'll have your work all cut out for you if you try that. Prince Valdemir rules a nation of fighters, and he's a wonderful soldier. I put my money on him if it comes to a show-down!"

"Really, dear?"

And at the sudden new expression in Oluf's eyes, I prepared to leave the room. That's my great trouble—my tongue is always running away with my head.

When I reached my room, I sat down in the window seat to think. Just at present Oluf was practically engaged to marry Prince Gregory, but, judging from her remarks, these royal engagements were quite as unstable as any other kind of engagement. Suppose she decided that she did not want to marry Gregory, after all—and that she did want to marry Valdemir. I certainly didn't see how she would manage to do this, unless he divorced me, which he was quite capable of doing if it suited him. And then, if she married Prince Gregory, they would fall upon Prebilof—these small nations seemed a quarrelsome lot!—and take his kingdom away from Valdemir. Undoubtedly Prebilof itself was safer with its ruler married to Oluf. Then where did I come in?

And a voice deep within me told me solemnly, and with undeniable truth, that in this game of nations, I and my poor affairs didn't come in at all.

In two days, the emissaries from Masvania arrived. An escort had ridden out to the frontier, and they entered

Galtek between lines of cheering people, amid great pomp and circumstance. Princess Oluf received them in the council chamber. Of course I wasn't there, but that night I met them all at a great ball given in their honor.

My partner had gone to find Oluf with a message from me when I heard a familiar voice at my shoulder:

"May I have the pleasure of the next dance? It is a one-step, played especially for me. I wish you to see that your pupil has profited by your instruction."

I looked around quickly—and met the amused eyes of the little Duke of Wortz. I couldn't speak for a moment. I could only stare at him and try to catch my breath.

"I don't understand," I managed to gasp presently, and then quickly, "Is Valdemir—is Prince Valdemir with you?"

"No. Why should he be?"

I could only shake my head. Then my partner returned, and the duke claimed the next dance. At its close, he led me out onto the balcony.

"Now tell me all about it," I begged. "I assume that you are here with the emissaries from Masvania. But how—how can you be——"

"And why not?"

"But as I understand it, Prince Valdemir and Prince Gregory are not on the best of terms. How can you serve them both?"

"I do not serve them both!" And he drew himself up haughtily.

"But you seemed to be the friend, almost the adviser, of Prince Valdemir of Standorf."

"Always in the service of my prince and my country!"

"Well, which is your country, for goodness' sake?" I demanded impatiently.

He rose, a rapt expression on his swarthy little face.

"Masvania. Long live Prince Gregory!"

I pulled his sleeve.

"All right. Do sit down!"

He seated himself, and I looked him over coldly. I never had liked him—you remember that—and now I was not at all favorably impressed with the part he was playing in the affairs of these two countries.

even then, and it was my business to know him and know him well. He thought, as everybody else did—as I took pains to have them think—that I was out of favor with my prince, an exile from my country. When he left for America, I crossed on the same ship, and we became very intimate. I can be a very pleasant traveling companion," he added ingenuously.

"In two months, the unsettled affairs in Prebilof called the prince home, and I accepted his invitation to visit him in Prebilof. At this time, both the government of Masvania and the government of Prebilof were urging a marriage with the Princess Oluf. Kosnia seemed to look with approval on the proposal, and the only question in doubt was which prince would Princess Oluf choose."



"But, *chérie*," Oluf began again, "how could he have taken you motoring? He wrote the river had risen."

Suddenly he began to chuckle. He leaned forward and touched my arm, his little eyes positively crinkling with diabolical laughter.

"You are an American. You will appreciate a joke like this. I must tell it to you." He settled back, looking like a wicked little gnome as he sat there hugging his knees with his arms.

"I knew Prince Valdemir in London. I went about with him a great deal. I was in the service of Prince Gregory

"I begin to see daylight," I remarked. He nodded delightedly.

"Yes, the dawn is coming. Fate played into my hands that night we met you on that lonely road. I found your locket, and instantly the whole daring scheme leaped into my mind. I asked the prince if he had ever seen the Princess Oluf. He said no. It is well for me, but unlucky for him, that he lied to me. Had I known of that meeting in Paris, which I heard of only re-



cently, I would never have dared to carry out my plan. I showed him the locket, with Princess Oluf's initial upon it, I pointed out the royal arms of Kosnia, and declared that Princess Oluf stood before us.

"Well, we carried you to Standorf, and all during that journey, I kept congratulating him on his good fortune and the opportunity he had of making satisfactory terms with Kosnia—having you in his hands.

"I urged an immediate marriage, and again fate was kind. The river rose a week before its time and flooded the country. We were imprisoned in Standorf, with no news of the real princess reaching us. I let suggestion, propinquity, and opportunity—three elements that have made and unmade kingdoms more times than once—and the charms of a fascinating girl, do their work on the mind and heart of Prince Valdemir.

"I left Standorf by way of the secret passage that runs under the river and brought back to the prince all the news I wanted him to hear. He wasn't curious—he had other things to interest him; he believed what I told him. His carelessness is apt to cost him dear. I left Standorf ostensibly to take word of your capture to Kosnia, but in reality to warn my sovereign to press his suit with all speed."

I looked at the enthusiastic little narrator with a feeling of great distaste. He positively seemed to take pride and pleasure in his dishonorable calling!

"You knew I was not the Princess Oluf," I said coldly, "and yet you urged Prince Valdemir to marry me. Why—I might have been anybody at all—an adventuress—anything! I never heard of such a dastardly thing!"

"One cannot be too nice when the needs of state demand drastic action, Miss Townly, or, rather, Princess Ruth," he assured me brazenly, not a whit abashed; then, "When I returned

from my last mission, as the river had gone down, contrary to my custom, I did not use the secret passage. But later I slipped out, intending to give an order to my men stationed at the entrance. This was when I met you. By the way, how in God's name did you discover the passage?"

"This is your story—not mine."

He shrugged.

"True, and it doesn't matter—now. Well, I knew in a moment who was struggling in my arms, but I didn't know what you had discovered, so could not risk bringing you before the prince. So I placed you in the dungeon for safe-keeping while I reconnoitered the palace."

"The guards—they also were spies?" I asked with deliberate meaning. But the little duke was not in the least offended; he merely nodded good-naturedly. "Well, go on," I added disgustedly. "You might as well finish now."

"When I saw Prince Valdemir that night, I could scarcely believe my good fortune. Truly, Prince Gregory must be beloved of the gods! Prince Valdemir was raving like a maniac. Princess Oluf was missing—and in ten words I discovered all that meant to Valdemir. A thorough search had been made, but no trace of you had been found. Naturally he never thought of the passage. The prince hardly listened to me when I told him that Prince Gregory had finally won the consent of the council of Kosnia to his marriage with Princess Oluf, and that this marriage would take place at once even if it meant war with Prebilof. Then I told him about the prisoner below—and who I suspected that prisoner was.

"He rushed down, with me at his heels, and we heard you singing—such an odd little song it was, too. I laughed at the time and marveled at your courage. Now—what was that song? Ah, I have it: 'Don't be what you ain't'—You must teach me the rest."

I laughed outright—I couldn't help it; the duke was having such a splendid time telling his disgraceful tale.

"That night saw the culmination of my dreams and marked the rise of the star of Masvania. The supposed Princess Oluf became the Princess of Prebilof." He threw back his head and drew a deep breath. "Prince Valdemir is no longer free! My sovereign will marry Princess Oluf! My work is well done!"

I rose and stared down at him.

"It is so well done that you deserve to be shot!"

"You are cruel. Are you not grateful to me that I have made you a princess?"

"I am not! And don't you be so sure that your work is well done!" I went on, with rising anger. "Prince Valdemir can divorce me."

"Not without a special dispensation."

"Well, I have no such handicap. I will go home! I will talk to my father. He knows everything and has great influence. Why—why, I will divorce Prince Valdemir myself!"

"On what grounds, your highness?"

"Desertion—his desertion," I answered hastily, and left him gasping like a trout on the grass.

Of course this interview with the Duke of Wortz had explained many things to me, but you can plainly see that my own affairs were in quite as unsatisfactory a state as they had been before. And what was worse, Oluf's seemed no better. She began to look miserably unhappy. She took to crying in the privacy of her own apartments, and there were rumors of scenes in the council chamber. She was beginning to lose her courage, when it came right down to marrying Prince Gregory. And she was in the same state about marrying Valdemir, although I made it a point to remind her more than once that as yet Prince Valdemir had not come forward as a claimant for her

hand. A crisis was in the air—and it fell like a thunderbolt.

One morning a messenger galloped into Galtek at daybreak with a note for the Duke of Wortz. In an hour, he sought an audience with Princess Oluf, and before noon the news was all over the palace.

Gregory of Masvania had taken his matrimonial affairs into his own hands and married the sister of one of the court nobles. And—this was really funny—the noble was no less a person than the Duke of Wortz himself!

The duke informed Oluf with chagrined disgust that his sister and Prince Gregory had long been in love with each other, but of course the needs of state had demanded his marriage with Oluf.

Oluf's feelings were not at all definite. Of course she was relieved, in a way, but what girl could really care about being jilted, even if her engagement has been merely a matter of necessity for her country? But I had to chuckle at the good joke on the busy little duke. That is, I chuckled for two days. After that, I didn't chuckle at all; I wept for hours and prayed to die.

Oluf sent for me, and the minute I entered her room, I felt that something of an unpleasant nature was about to happen to me.

She was sitting at her desk, and her blue eyes were shining, and there was an air of suppressed excitement about her, of happiness—I would say of hilarity if I were speaking of any one but Oluf. I regarded her with surprise and then, after a moment, as she sat there smiling at me, I looked out on the sun-splashed terrace and wondered why, in this atmosphere of joyousness, I should still feel apprehensive.

"I've just had an interview with my chancellor," Oluf announced presently, "and I've received information that is of the greatest significance."

She paused and looked at me, and her usually tranquil eyes positively danced.

"I'm telling you my happy news first," she went on slowly, keeping her eyes fixed on my face, "because you are very dear to me—and because I know that my welfare lies very close to your heart."

"Of course," I murmured politely, when she waited for me to make some suitable response.

"Prince Valdemir is coming to Kosnia. He is coming incognito. His visit will be informal, but it can mean only one thing. Can you guess what that is, Ruth dear?"

I looked at her and could feel the hot waves of color sweeping over my cheeks. Well, I might have spared my blushes!

"Prince Valdemir's coming," Oluf went on smoothly, "is the first step toward arranging an alliance between Prebilof and Kosnia. Valdemir is evidently not at all like Gregory. He makes his own matrimonial arrangements—although the thing has no precedent. His ministers have at last brought him to see his duty toward his people. Of course you know, Ruth," she concluded with sudden seriousness, "no word of this is to be known. You must give me your word on this."

I finally was able to take my eyes from her face. When I looked on the terrace again, I remember being faintly resentful that the sun was still shining and the trees still waving in the breeze. A dark-horizon and the threat of coming storm would have better suited my mood.

"This alliance will be popular in both countries," Oluf went on with happy musing. "It makes even me happy. The clouds are lifting from my kingdom. For the first time in months, I dare face the future fairly."

I stood her air of happiness as long as I could. I listened to her endless reiteration of the advantage to both coun-

tries this marriage would be, while I sat quietly and mentally packed my trunks and prepared for a speedy departure to America, where there are no princes and no alliances that must be consummated no matter on whose heart the foundations are built.

Then, quite suddenly, it came to me that I would have to tell Oluf the truth, the whole truth, to the bitter finish, regarding my stay in Standorf. It didn't look as if Valdemir had any intention of so doing, and he being clearly proved a cad by this—why, things had reached a point where Oluf had to know.

I rose and walked over to her chair. "You simply can not marry Prince Valdemir," I said as calmly as I could. "You can not marry him, and that is all there is to it. I have married him myself." And I sat down suddenly.

Now, you know the average girl would have fainted on the spot, or had violent hysterics, or made some sort of an emotional scene, but Oluf did nothing like this. She simply sat there, looking at me intently, and then she smiled slowly and serenely. You know serenity up to a certain point is all very well, but after that it becomes maddening.

"Ruth," she said at length, "you surprise me." But she didn't sound surprised—she hardly sounded interested.

"I was surprised myself when it happened," I told her, "but that doesn't alter the fact that it *has* happened. I am the Princess of Prebilof—and there can't be two."

Then I detailed the whole story, beginning right at that night at Madame Manonne's when I had first met Prince Valdemir. I suppose there comes a time in everybody's life when it is a positive joy to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Oluf heard me through with a sort of detached interest, as if she were listening to a story that was really no personal concern of hers; and when I finished, she sat looking quietly into space,

with her hands folded in her lap. Presently she leaned forward and took my chin in her cool hands.

"Do you love him, Ruth?" she asked.

I made round eyes at her and laughed. As I mentioned before, a laugh is often as good as anything else to tide you over a tight place.

"Do I love him? Why, certainly I don't love him! How could I? Why—why, Oluf, I can't think what put such an idea into your head!"

"Can't you, dear? Another question. Be patient, Ruth, and remember that a great deal is at stake. Do you believe that Prince Valdemir loves you?"

"My dear Oluf—really you are amusing! Don't waste time trying to speculate concerning the feelings of that young man. Love with him is a twin of fancy—a purely transitory emotion—here to-day and over the hills to-morrow. If he ever had a really genuine emotion like love, he wouldn't know what to do with it!"

"Are you sure? Oh, Ruth, remember that love passes our door but once! Don't be too proud to catch at his wings as he goes!"

Of course I know now that that was my cue to throw aside all pretense and be honest with Oluf, but could I know that then? Could I trample my pride underfoot and tell her that I loved Valdemir? How could I do that—especially when I took his silence into consideration, and now his acquiescence in a marriage with Oluf? Then I felt my lips twisting into a smile. What disposition did they plan to make of me?

"I am waiting, dear," Oluf reminded me.

"For what?" I demanded. "To hear me say that I am madly in love with Prince Valdemir? Well, you will never hear me say it!"

For a long moment, Oluf looked into my eyes. Then she kissed me and laughed. Afterward, she walked to the

window, where she stood for a long time looking out into the sunshine. When she turned, she was all smiles and happiness again.

"Well, dear, what you have just told me simplifies everything. All the arrangements can go on as I have planned."

"Indeed! Upon my word, Oluf, you take it coolly! Suppose I might fancy myself as the Princess of Prebilof? They—they are wearing titles this season in my country."

I didn't care at all about the expression that dawned in Oluf's eyes.

"You have said you don't care for him; you have assured me that he doesn't care for you. Would you let your ambition stand in the way of my welfare?"

Facts so often have a harsh sound when you put them into words. I looked sullenly away and made no answer.

"Do you remember your vow to me? Does it mean nothing to you?" Oluf went on sternly. "I call upon you now to redeem your pledge. Ruth, can't you see that you must give Prince Valdemir up? What does he mean to you? An empty title. A divorce can be arranged quietly. Your pride need not suffer, because nothing will be known to the outside world." She placed compelling hands on my shoulders. "Ruth, I call upon you to stand aside. My whole future rests on you."

Of course my future was a mere matter of nothing at all! But I saw right then that I had no case, when it came to the moral aspect of the affair. And after that I didn't argue; I agreed to anything she wished.

Let me tell you this—there is a whole lot in this doctrine of the divine right of kings. The doctrine may be entirely wrong, but they manage the practice all along the line. "Alice in Wonderland" had much truth in it. When it comes to the life and pursuit of happi-



I stretched out my arms. "Valdemir—Valdemir—  
I wish things might have been different!"

ness of the mere common people, it is a matter of "Off with his head!"

Now, I am not given to wailing my woes to the stars in the heavens, who only shine joyously down upon you anyway, and go their own sweet way; another thing, I know when I am beaten and I hope I am what we call a good sport. But after my interview with Oluf, I did think I was entitled to one good cry, considering the state of my affairs, and I took it on Aunt Ollie's shoulder. She seemed my only friend. I wept and, like all girls under the in-

fluence of tears, grew confidential.

And I must say that Aunt Ollie took my tale with enough emotional skyrocketts to make up completely for Oluf's tranquillity. She exclaimed and she wondered; she walked about the room, with a positive swagger; and she laughed with twittering triumph. Then she stood before me and regarded me with an expression akin to awe.

I mentioned the termination of my interview with Oluf to bring her back to earth. She airily dismissed this matter with a wave of her hand.

"Twaddle, my dear—silly, sentimental, schoolgirl twaddle! Never give it a thought!"

"But, Aunt Ollie, Oluf says——"

"Oluf says! Oluf

says! I must say I am annoyed with Oluf! You were quite right to come to me, child. The affair needs a firm hand. But understand this—Oluf has nothing to do with the matter. Why, her claims are ridiculous! Of all things! It seems to me that Oluf takes a great deal upon herself!"

"It is for Kosnā," I said weakly. "This marriage is so important to Kosnia."

Aunt Ollie bridled.

"Well, just let me tell you, Ruth, it is quite as important to the Townly fam-

ily as it could possibly be to this little three-cornered kingdom that I can't find on the map without my glasses!"

"I might get America into war," I suggested faintly.

"Oh, don't be silly! Wars have gone out of fashion. To-day they manage these small countries with loans and foreign-trade treaties." She regarded me with a thoughtful eye. "A crown will be very becoming to you, Ruth. It will give you height."

"Well," I declared at length, "all this is very well, Aunt Ollie, except for the fact that I don't want to stay married to Prince Valdemir. Why," I ended with rising wrath as I thought of it, "I wouldn't marry him on a bet! He's not at all my idea of a husband!"

"Your idea!" Aunt Ollie scoffed. "What do you know about husbands? You wouldn't think of living in Prebilo, anyway, and any man makes a good enough husband if you keep him on the other side of the world."

You couldn't maintain any sort of an argument with Aunt Ollie. She couldn't see over the top of the crown of Prebilo.

As the days went on, Oluf developed a most unpleasant habit of discussing Prince Valdemir with me, despite a marked lack of encouragement. Positively, I thought she watched me with the merciless eyes of a dissector whose victim is under the knife. In spite of Aunt Ollie's view of the matter, I had accepted Oluf's position and listened with what calm I could while she volubly discussed marrying my husband.

"Oh, I dare say you'll get along well enough," I remarked wearily one day. "But," I added warningly, "take my advice and don't fall in love with him. Once that happens, he'll tire of you in a week!"

"Tire of me!" Oluf's tone was complacently incredulous.

"Oh, I know you're beautiful," I admitted, "and you're charming—but

there's nothing uncertain about you, Oluf. Prince Valdemir would know what to expect of you every minute of the day."

"But surely one should love one's husband——"

"At present he is *my* husband," I reminded her unpleasantly.

Oluf laughed.

"I dare say it's very well you are parting. You'd torment him to death."

"Well, I should think even that would be preferable to dying of a diet of sweets!"

Here I felt I had reached my limit and went up to my room to consult a list of steamer sailings.

Prince Valdemir came to Kosnia on my birthday. Of course nobody knew it was my birthday; even Aunt Ollie failed to remember it, and I didn't feel in the least like celebrating, but I certainly felt as if his coming that day was the last bitter drop in the cup. I firmly refused to meet him before I had to, and instead of being one of the party to welcome him, as Oluf seemed to think was fitting, although I couldn't see why—lately I had observed in my friend a decided lack of the sense of fitness of things—on the day of his arrival, I took my horse and, followed by the escort that Oluf insisted upon having at my heels every time I left the palace, I rode out in the direction of the hills that ringed the city.

There was a big grove of pines at the top of a plateau five miles away. It was my favorite ride, and to-day I ordered my escort to wait for me at the foot and rode to the top alone. There I dismounted and sat down on the brown pine needles and looked out over the panorama spread before me—forest and lawn, meadows of rippling grasses, and wonderful hills and woods above it all. Away in the distance, over the mountain, under the peaks of snow, up, up close to the dawn that I had last seen glowing red on the ridge of sentinel



... pines, was the castle of Standorf. I couldn't see it, except with the eyes of my heart, but I knew it was there, standing grim and watchful, the highest spot in the kingdom of Prebilof, the country of Prince Valdemir of Prebilof, the man I had married, or, rather who had married me, and into whose unconscious—and doubtless indifferent—keeping I had given every bit of my heart and soul. Oh, the time had long passed for denying this—and, anyway, what did it matter to anybody—but me?

Up there alone I stretched out my arms.

"Valdemir—Valdemir—I wish things might have been different!"

And then, quite like the last chapter of a love story—and it was such a beautiful setting for a love story, too—somebody knelt behind me, and two arms slipped about my waist, and my head was drawn back until it rested against a uniformed shoulder. I tried to twist about, but I was held fast, and when I looked up into the dark eyes so close to mine, I can't remember that I struggled much. I let Valdemir kiss me again and again, and finally I turned and rested my lips against his throat.

And were his first words to me tender, ardent words of love, regret for my suffering, promises to make amends in a glorious future? They were not!

"Ruth—you little daughter of Satan!—why didn't you tell Oluf the truth in the first place?"

There he was, putting me on the defensive as usual!

"Why should it be left to me? I didn't observe any headlong haste on your part to proclaim me Princess of Prebilof!"

"But, darling of my dreams——"

"You needn't call me the darling of your dreams!" I said stormily. "You who come on a mission of courtship!"

He sat down beside me and laughed down into my eyes.

"I always thought you overrated your

own cleverness! Now, if you think you could possess that turbulent soul of yours in patience, and put a check on your unruly little tongue, I will tell you a chapter in the history of your life that you don't know."

And I sat there in his arms and listened to him. And if the kingdom of Kosnia had fallen before my eyes, if Oluf had stood there before me and condemned me forever, if I had broken my father's heart, once I had felt his lips on mine, once I had been held close in his arms, I would have stayed there and counted forever too short a time.

"You didn't think I was really in the dark as to who you were those days in Standorf, did you, dearest?" Valdemir asked. "Why, I knew who you were twenty-four hours after you were in the castle. I listened to your story that morning in the library, watched you—and your self-possession—your gestures—your funny, slang—everything told me that you were telling the truth."

"Then why, for goodness' sake, did you let that miserable little Duke of Wortz play his game——"

"His game! My dear child, he was playing my game! I wanted nothing in the world so much as to marry you. I was mad about you! I had to have you!"

"Yes," I told him, "you have certainly acted in the last month as if you were mad about me!"

"Yes? And who is to blame for that? If you had told Oluf the truth from the first——"

"How could I? My pride——"

"Your pride! What about my pride? Do you think I found it easy to write to Oluf—to tell her—to beg her to help me?"

I sat up suddenly.

"Did you write to Oluf?"

"Certainly I did. I couldn't wait forever for you to come to your senses. She was very kind, too. She arranged all this, planned the details. She said

that the proposal of a marriage with her would force your hand. She was kinder than you ever would have been, you little vixen! I wish I had fallen in love with *her*!"

"It's not too late for that."

"Yes, it is—and you know it. Kiss me."

I twisted about petulantly.

"You treat your wife like a slave, or a child—or a favorite in a Turkish harem!"

He laughed.

"I promise to make the combination of all three interesting."

"Not to me."

"Those are just your lips speaking. Your heart knows better."

"You seem to know a great deal about my heart."

"Have I thought of anything else in the last month? God—what this month has been to me! A perfect hell of torment!"

I felt his body stiffen suddenly, and when I looked up, what I saw in his eyes made me kiss him quickly, and his arms tightened about me and held me close, so close that I could feel the wild beating of his heart against my cheek.

"That night I came to you—after you had become my wife—everything in me, every tingling nerve—my heart—my soul itself was on fire for love of you! I took you in my arms. I felt that I stood at the gates of paradise. Then you looked at me. Darling, it will take all your life to love away that wound

in my heart! You looked at me with all the hatred of a little trapped animal flaming through the bars of your soul! And as I looked down into your eyes—eyes in which I had hoped to see that light that makes a man believe in heaven, love awakening in a dawn of glory—I saw—what? My dreams going to pieces like a ship on the rocks. I stared into the wreckage, aghast at what I had done. For not only did I face the ruin of my own life—but I had wrecked the future of my people. And for what? For the hatred of a girl whom I would have sold my soul to the Evil One to have made my own!"

I touched the quivering nerve in his cheek softly.

"Oh, Valdemir, Valdemir—if I had only understood! Why didn't you make me understand?"

"I couldn't—after that. I wanted my wife—the mother of my sons—to be mine in mind and body—and soul!"

We had risen and now stood looking out toward the east. His arms closed about me, and he drew a deep breath as he looked down into my eyes.

"When," he asked unsteadily, "when will you come to me? Soon—how soon?"

"To-morrow—to-night—any time," I answered. Then I leaned my head against his heart and quoted softly:

"Across the hills and far away,  
Beyond their utmost purple rim  
Beyond the night, across the day,  
The happy princess followed him."



# *The Golden Gleam*

By Margery Land May

Author of "Her Boy and Her Bit," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

**In love with a girl working for the Red Cross drive  
proved rather an expensive luxury for Philip Leeds.**

WHEN Philip Leeds came back to Rosecourt, every one was wild to entertain him. But Alicia did it first. That in itself was not unusual, because, in the smart little set in which she moved, Alicia Grey was acknowledged leader. The unusual—I might say the ironic—part about it was that it was at her party—a delightful, jazz-band affair—that Leeds met Aubrey Dean.

Leaving Rosecourt five years before, Leeds had carried with him the town's predictions of his ruin. He had lived viciously. Even now his face showed that. Drink had undermined him—that and women. But he had fought all that down somehow. He had made good in Alaskan mines. It was like him to take a grim satisfaction in returning to his birthplace and shoving his buoyant health, his air of success, and his sixty thousand dollars in its face.

Besides, he was fond of the old place, anyway, and it was good to be back among familiar sights and sounds. Alicia alone was worth the trip. Good old Alicia! He had cared for her crazily once. And to think she had married Spencer Grey! Not that Spence wasn't a good sort, for he was. But Alicia was smart and dashing, and Spence—well, he was commonplace and stocky and dull. Good-natured enough—oh, yes—and as generous as they're made, but hardly a foil for her quick tongue and mind.

Alicia had insisted on his putting up with them.

"I'm going to give you a party, Phil," she said, as she plumped herself on the bed and watched him put his things away.

His eyes—dark, long-lashed, and as beautiful as a woman's—shot her a humorous look. Just then he was leaning over his suit case, sorting out some ties.

"Me? A party?" His voice was low and deep-toned and suave. "What kind of a party?"

"A jazz party, with all the old crowd and some of the new. There'll be punch served in the arbors, and Japanese lanterns over the lawns, and dancing, of course, and girls."

He shelved these last.

"Japanese lanterns!" he groaned. "I suppose that means I'll have to hang 'em?"

"Quite so," she said and laughed.

That night at dinner, Alicia, in her telegraphic way, announced the news to Spencer.

"We're raising Cain to-morrow night, Spence. Phil's going to make his re-début. I'm having a band over, and the crowd. I'll leave getting the wine to you."

Spence's pudgy face fell into an expression of woe.

"She's always having 'em over, Phil," he accused with a rueful grin. "Regular all-night cabaret this house is, but

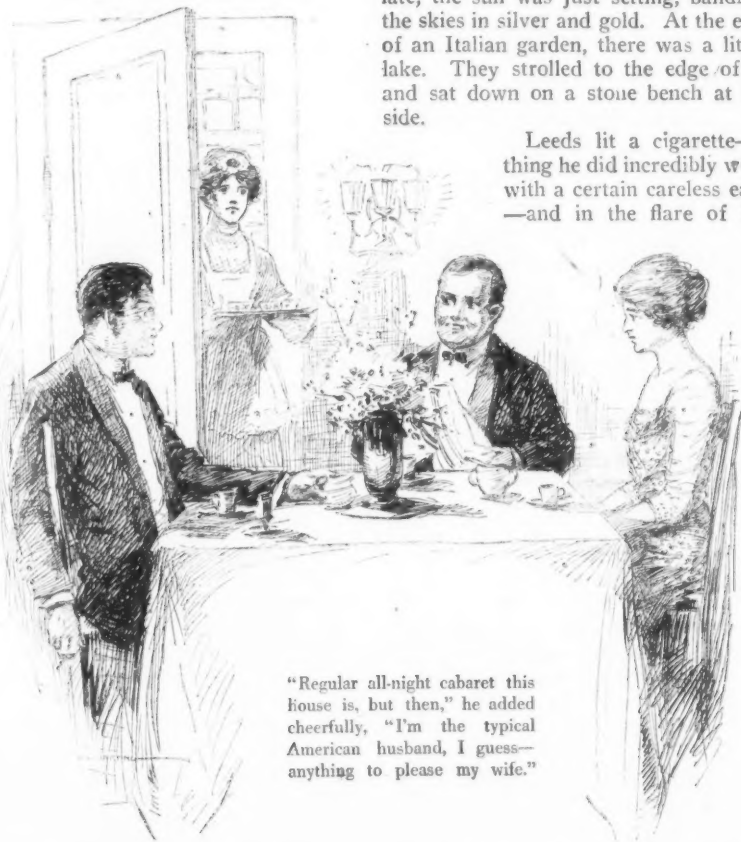
then," he added cheerfully, "I'm the typical American husband, I guess—anything to please my wife."

The look he gave Alicia was pitifully adoring. Leeds felt touched. He glanced away. Spence went on:

pected she had. Anyway, she was very gay and carefree after Grey had gone, and she and Leeds went strolling down the lawns, through the spreading gardens of roses.

It was midsummer, and though it was late, the sun was just setting, banding the skies in silver and gold. At the end of an Italian garden, there was a little lake. They strolled to the edge of it and sat down on a stone bench at its side.

Leeds lit a cigarette—a thing he did incredibly well, with a certain careless ease—and in the flare of his



"Regular all-night cabaret this House is, but then," he added cheerfully, "I'm the typical American husband, I guess—anything to please my wife."

"The party being on, I guess I'll have to run down to my office for an hour or two. I had counted on working tomorrow night, but this evening will do just as well, if you don't mind, Leeds."

Leeds said he didn't; so that left Alicia and him alone. Perhaps she had reasoned that it would. He half sus-

match, the tanned, lean lines of his face stood out. Alicia's eyes, dark and restless and brooding, looked at him. Her hand found his. She sighed:

"And so you never married, Phil. I wonder why."

He glanced at her through puffs of smoke. She was still striking, he

thought, in her slender, dark-skinned fashion.

He answered, smiling:

"Heavens, child, I don't know. I know 'em too well—I guess—the women. Perennial bachelor—that's me. I'm not the marrying kind."

He spoke with the deep complacency of the piratical male whose love had ever won too quick and too fierce a return.

He said: "I'll never be in love enough to marry," not knowing he'd revise all that when he had danced with Aubrey Dean.

She was standing in a rose arbor the next evening when he saw her. He stopped short, flinging away the cigarette he'd left the house to smoke.

"She's like Cryseis—girl of gold," he thought, and, flushing a bit, moved toward her. She started at his approach. He smiled.

"Pardon me," he said, "but if you're custodian of this"—he indicated the punch bowl—"perhaps you'd not mind giving a thirsty man a drink."

He thought her smile like a streak of sun, her voice like children singing.

"I'm not custodian, really," she said. "Marie Davis asked me to stand guard while she went to fetch her shawl, but of course"—her eyes, dark, heavily fringed, shone up at him with golden lights—"I'd never refuse the thirsty."

She filled a glass. He took it with slightly shaking fingers. Her scintillant charm befogged him. The music of a waltz, remote and tender, seemed to trickle through his soul. He summoned a laugh to hide his unaccustomed lack of ease.

"Wine, woman, and song—could anything be more appropriate?" he said, to be answered coldly with:

"Probably not—for you, Mr. Leeds."

Her nod, quick and cool, dismissed him, but though a sudden deep flush spread over his face, he made no move to go. Instead, he stepped closer.

"That did sound rotten," he said contritely, "though I didn't mean it so." He hesitated, and then, with the assurance of a man who'd always gained by daring, he added: "That's a wonderful waltz. Will you dance it with me?"

She glanced at her program.

"I have it," she told him. "Ah, there's my partner now. Later we'll dance, perhaps," she promised vaguely.

Later, though, she made that promise good. She danced as Leeds knew she would, like a gauzy thing on wings. Straight from the heart of some dream she danced into his heart forever. Closely he held her, his lips just touching the gold of her hair; deeply his eyes gazed into hers.

"You're like daffodils—all sunlight and gold," he told her. "I could dance this way forever."

Her smile mocked him. He clutched her closer and, thrilling to her slender nearness, he felt his spirit stir, his being quicken.

The music softened, died away. Till its last sweet note, he held her. Then:

"Let's go," he said, and he took her through the heavy fragrance of rose gardens to the tiny lake beyond.

The moon was a silver lamp in the sky. It shimmered down upon her. In its light she seemed to gather to herself the beauty of all the earth. Leeds, tall and graceful in white flannels and blue coat, folded his arms and stood for a moment looking down on her. Then he lifted his handsome head and searched the heavens. Breathing deeply of the air, he tried to steady himself before he said in queerly ravaged tones:

"I've never believed in magic—in love magic, that is. Love at first sight—I've thought that writers' rot. But now I don't. I know it's terribly, poignantly true."

He sat down beside her on the stone bench and, bowing his head, he brought her hand palm upward to his lips. He held it there long seconds. Then:

"Only last night, sitting where we're sitting now, I told Alicia I'd never be in love enough to marry." He hesitated, then flung out bitterly: "I was a fool—a poor, blind fool!"

Her laugh was like a brush of song. She drew her hand away.

"Are you telling me," she asked with lifted brows, "you've seen the light, like Paul on the road to Damascus, and that I'm the one who's struck the scales from off your eyes?" Again her laughter, sweet and cool, sharpened its way to his heart. "If so—don't, please!"

His face fell into sullen lines.

"Why not? Is it so impossible, or do you number among the unimaginative few who measure love by time?" he demanded with a sort of impotent rage.

She rose, drawing her scarf about her.

"Why not? Because I've heard of your kind of love and I rather disrelish being numbered among its victims." Her eyes, softly serene, sought the tops of the poplars. "Dear Mr. Leeds," she added sweetly, "you're wasting your time. I'm not in the least susceptible."

He sprang to his feet with a muffled oath and caught her by the arms. Holding her from him, he probed her eyes with his.

"I don't deserve that implication!" he retorted hotly. "I don't know what you've done to me, but I'm mad about you—you darling!"

He touched her arms, her shoulders, swept her to his heart. His lips sought hers and clung.

She staggered from him, aquiver with that kiss. Slowly his eyes lifted to see her trembling before him, throat pulsing, bosom heaving, hand on heart. Paling, flushing, she mocked him with her eyes. He groped toward her. She breathed a cry and fled.

The next day, when he and Alicia were having luncheon *à deux*, Leeds mentioned her with elaborate casualness.

"Bully party last night!" he said, meeting Alicia's eyes above a bowl of roses. "By the way, who's that Aubrey Dean I waltzed with once? She certainly is a looker."

Alicia was just as casual as he.

"Oh, she? She's a visitor here. Spends the summers with her aunt, a Mrs. Castleton. I met her at the Red Cross in the bandage department. Nice enough girl, she seems, though I don't know much about her. Yes, she is pretty, if you care for the gold-and-white type. She's horribly poor. A teacher, I think she said she was."

Leeds laughed rather forcedly.

"Schoolmarm, eh? Well, she's certainly hiding her light under a bushel. I'd never suspect *her* of teaching English syntax or hearing A B C's."

The rest of the luncheon was rather strained. After it, Leeds excused himself and said, with a betraying flush, that he thought he'd go downtown and prowling about a bit. He'd drop in at the club and look in on the boys. Alicia told him he was a nuisance and shoed him along. She was gay and sweet about it, but Leeds had a feeling her quick eyes probed his soul. He had a sense of guilt as he swung off through the trees. Hang it all, why did women like Alicia marry the Greys of the world, he wondered; and then, because he was filled with an indefinable pity for her, he turned at the gate and waved his hat. A bit of cambric answered back. Leeds swore and trudged along, still pitying.

But he forgot all that when he reached downtown and got Her on the phone. He was a long time arguing in the booth, but he emerged at last triumphant. Outside, he chartered a jitney.

"You must wear seven-league boots," Aubrey said, as he came striding into her yard. "No, I can't shake hands. See—mine are terribly potty. I'm gardening."





But he took them, mud and all, clasp-  
ing them snugly. Then soberly he  
eyed her.

"Pink bonnet, checked gingham,  
muddy shoes—I love them all. But  
best of all," he laughed, "I love the  
smudge on yonder cheek." He took his  
handkerchief and gravely wiped it off.  
"I love it so much I'm going to keep  
it," he said.

She thrust a trowel into his hands.

"You dig. But then you can't, I

s'pose, you're all so  
white and clean.  
Never mind, I'll do  
it myself, and you  
can talk if you  
want."

He sat down  
Turkish fashion on  
the grass and said:

"And I do want  
to tremendously.  
But first of all, I  
want to ask your  
pardon—for last  
night!"

She flushed like  
roses, and color  
stormed up in his  
face to the roots of  
his black hair. She  
turned her back on  
him and feverishly  
started digging.

"I guess I'll for-  
give you," she mur-  
mured.

He ran his fin-  
gers through the  
silky grass. Diffi-  
culty he contin-  
ued:

"I'm not a cad—  
really. I hope you  
won't think me one.  
I did—what—I  
did," he faltered,  
"because all of a  
flash—like sudden

—I knew—I cared." There was a hush.  
Miserable, humble, he sat there, want-  
ing her in his arms. "Of course I  
couldn't expect you to believe that," he  
finished lamely.

"No, you couldn't." She turned to  
him, tossing him her bonnet. "It wor-  
ries me," she said.

The sun streamed down, haloing her  
hair. Her lips were sweet. The witch  
light of her beauty quickened him.  
With brows knit he cried:

"Haven't I a chance to make you believe me—trust me?"

Whimsically she surveyed him.

"Old axioms, like Scriptures, are never out of date," she began, adorably wise. "'Give a dog a bad name——' You remember the rest. Well, that applies to you, I'm afraid. You see, I've summered here three years, and I've had you and your escapades and loves dished up for me at 'most every dinner and tea. Like the bold, bad men in stories, there's a fictional element about you that makes you a perfectly luscious topic for tea-time chatter." "He charms them, bends them, breaks them—and never cares. Oh, yes, my dear, a charming fellow!" she mimicked with a bob of her head. "I can hear them now, can't you?"

Wincingly, he nodded. She went on: "So with that, and with last night to carry out the precedent you'd set already, you can hardly expect much credulity from me."

His face fell into dogged lines.

"All right, then," he countered harshly, "I'll accept you on your terms. What are you? My enemy or friend?"

She lifted to him luminous eyes.

Oh—friend, of course," she cooed.

He saw her often after that. His old friends—those who made tea-time chatter of him—made him their excuse for gayety during war. He was always riding or sailing or golfing, and usually Aubrey was along. A month passed like that. Then came the night at Blodgett's Bend.

Blodgett's Bend was the official name of a crystal-clear lake in the midst of a forest of trees. It was ten miles from Rosecourt, and a wonderful place for bathing.

Marie Davies gave the party, but every one took lunch. Leeds himself produced the beer for the picnic after swimming.

It had been a week since he'd seen

Aubrey, and so he had keenly anticipated the outing. But, from the first, everything went awry. To begin with, Alicia skillfully maneuvered his motor-ing out with her, which wasn't at all what he had planned. Then, at the lake, a young whippersnapper named Shaw, who was captain in the reserves, occupied Aubrey with farcy dives till the signal for "eats" was given.

An evening chill had whipped in on them, so sweaters were pulled over bathing suits and a crackling fire was built. This last inspired marshmallow toasting, and Alicia, with some remark about his adeptness in the past, thrust a stick into Leeds's hands and kept him on the job. Later on, Alicia—she was mentally swearing now—tossed him her guitar and for an hour kept him strumming while everybody sang. Finally, however, the sight of Aubrey slipping toward the lake roused his protestations.

"No more orchestra," he said, heedless of begging voices. "Sorry, but I'm off for another dip," and he loped away in time to see Aubrey's dive cutting the moonlit waters.

She swam with a lithe, clean-cut stroke that sped her through the waters. Before he dove, Leeds watched her make the raft.

"Neptune isn't in it with you," he said as he hoisted himself beside her and plastered back his hair. "I thought I'd never catch you."

She gazed up at the moon.

"Did you want to catch me?" she asked.

"I've been wanting to all week, but you've been so exclusive and mean—and to-night—good Lord, what chance have I had with that captain fellow about?"

She ignored this last.

"But the Red Cross drive started last week, and I've been busy getting money. I haven't seen any one—hardly."

She started to slip off the raft, but he caught her by the arm.

"I think we'd better swim in," she said, with a little look of surprise.

"Do you?" he answered shortly. "Well, I don't, and, what's more, you're going to stay here and listen to what I have to say."

Eyes drooped, she waited. He rushed on:

"Aubrey, I accepted to-day a position in a munitions works in Detroit. I leave for there day after to-morrow. For the last time, I'm asking you—will you be my wife?"

"For the last time!" she echoed.

He nodded firmly.

"Well, I certainly do like that!" she cried.

He scowled darkly.

"You don't expect me to keep eternally at it, do you?"

She edged away from his side and slipped into the lake.

"Phil," she said, still grasping the raft, "the first day I met you, you kissed me; the second, you told me you cared. Since then you've said you loved me a hundred times in a hundred ways, but never once until to-night have you asked me to be your wife."

"Aubrey!"

"If you had," she teased as she swam away, "I'd have said yes long ago!"

The next day Alicia mentioned Aubrey Dean before Leeds had a chance.

"Aubrey's a nice child," she said with a languid air.

"Nice! That's hardly expressive. She's like a golden gleam——"

"You mean," she intercepted, "she likes the golden gleam of money. Not that I blame her exactly—poor kiddie! Poverty's never pleasant, but I do feel sorry for Richmond Shaw."

Leeds' brows lifted in a questioning flash.

"Shaw? What of him?" he asked coldly.

Alicia laughed.

"Stupid! Where are your eyes? Any one can see he's wild about her. But it's no use." She shrugged. "What chance does he stand on a captain's pay? None, I tell you. She's out for bigger fish."

With trembling hands, he lit a cigarette.

"Are you insinuating that she'd marry for money?" he asked.

She colored angrily.

"Why should I insinuate anything, Phil?" was her crisp retort. "I'm simply repeating common talk. Why, only yesterday she asked me all about *your* money——"

"She did? And you told her? What did she say?"

Alicia laughed unpleasantly.

"She said she'd like to have it. Why? You weren't thinking of giving it to her, were you?" she questioned sarcastically.

He stopped short, a queer look in his eyes. His face was ashen and gray.

"No, I wasn't, but I am now," he said, and left her.

An hour later, he was facing Aubrey Dean in the little parlor of Mrs. Castleton's home.

"Aubrey," he said in answer to her questions, "last night I asked you to be my wife. I asked you because I loved you better than my life. I'd never asked any woman before. I'm not a bad loser. I've staked my life and my money—many a time—on a single throw. Last night it was my happiness I gambled with. You made me think I'd won." He felt a constriction at his throat. His voice came thickly. "I thought I'd won until this morning, when Alicia told me ugly things I dare not believe are true."

She swayed before him, white and slim—lovely as an angel. Her eyes were honest as she said:

"Tell me, Philip. I'm not afraid."

He took courage from that, and his



"All right, then—here's all the song I've got—sixty thousand dollars in a draft made out to you."

face relaxed from its steellike mold. Jerkily he told her Alicia's words.

"She said you wanted my money." He grasped her hands, drawing her to him. "Aubrey, deny all that for me. Don't cheat me of your love."

There came the noise of silence more tensely expressive than words. Leeds gave, at last, an unnatural laugh and spoke with icy fury:

"It's clear that you can't deny it—that you'd sell yourself for a song." He dropped her wrists. His smile had suffering in it. "All right, then—here's

all the song I've got—sixty thousand dollars in a draft made out to you." He tossed her the check. Halfway to the door, he stopped. "Marriage without love, like Alicia's marriage to Grey, is hell. I love you enough to give you chance enough and money enough to find what makes it heaven."

He gave her a poignant, anguished look, turned swiftly, and was gone.

In the blackness of the following hours, he bought his ticket, packed his things, and told his friends good-by. At six o'clock he was at the station, await-

ing the train that left at seven. Huddled on a bench, he sat numb and staring, tasting death in the drum of life's energies.

A trunk truck rumbled by; he heard the whistles of engines, the tap of many feet. A baby cried; a newsie announced the *Rosecourt Times*.

"Paper, mister?" he whispered to the crouching, listless form.

Leeds flipped him a coin. Habit focused his eyes upon the evening news. Suddenly he started. He saw a name—his name; two pictures—his and Hers!

"Philip Leeds gives Sixty Thousand Dollars to Captain Dean of Precinct L to aid the Red Cross Drive. Couple Soon to Marry."

The paper slipped from his fingers. Like a flash he was on his feet.

"I can't believe it!" he cried aloud, to be answered with:

"But, dear, you must. It's true."

He wheeled about. His hands out-

stretched to—Aubrey. He staggered back, brushing the mists from his eyes."

"Aubrey——"

She caught his arm.

"We've forty minutes in which to marry and hurry back for our train. I've got my ticket. The motor's waiting. On the way to church, I'll explain."

Safely ensconced in the speeding car, close clasped by his arm, she said:

"I did say the things Alicia told you, dear. But it was only because I was working for the drive and wanted to know just how to assess you. And then, when you came storming at me and gave me no chance for words, I knew, in the face of everything, you'd hardly be convinced, so I didn't try to explain. I just gave away the thing that had thrown a blot on our love. The soldiers need it. We don't."

He stooped his head and saw in her eyes the golden gleam of love.



## SONG OF THE HOMING SOLDIER

LOVE, I am coming home!  
 Over the great green crests of sea,  
 Where once such perils lurked for me,  
 Now that the fighting nears an end  
 And the stricken Old World towns may mend  
 Their shattered walls, while the driven folk  
 Pluck up heart as they rend the yoke,  
 I am coming home!

Sweet, I am coming home!  
 Think not the deep will yawn for me,  
 Loaded with death as it used to be.  
 Menace of drowning? That might do  
 With a lesser love than I bear to you!  
 Up from that fathomless water cold  
 My great love buoys me, safe and bold.  
 Be sure I shall live for you, hold you, sweet,  
 Strained to my heart till you feel its beat,  
 For I'm coming—coming home!

RHEEM DOUGLAS.

# Catarrhal Colds

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

THE early spring months are conceded to be the most trying of all seasons, at least throughout the north-temperate zone. The climatic conditions at this time are particularly severe upon the mucous membranes of the entire respiratory tract, which accounts in part for the great prevalence of nose, throat, and bronchial affections. It is with difficulty that we can maintain a pleasing appearance and philosophize agreeably on the state of our health; only the fact that so many are in the same condition throws a humorous aspect upon the matter, thus releasing a fund of good-natured raillery which lifts one out of a thick, muddled state and acts like a tonic. Otherwise, transient "colds" would frequently set up more depressing conditions than they do.

Colds date back to the time when man first donned clothing and lived in houses. The rheums, catarrhs, and fluxes of the ancients were nothing more or less than our modern influenzal conditions in one form or another. Hippocrates described them with astonishing clearness, except that, in those far-away days, the secretions of the nose were supposed to flow from the brain. This old belief has been handed down to the present day by the French in their term, "*rhume de cerveau*"—a cold in the brain. We speak of a cold

in the head, which is also somewhat of a misnomer, for what we understand as such is an inflammation of the mucous membrane of the nose—rhinitis.

This condition is perhaps the most lightly regarded of all maladies, and to one in the full flush of health, it may mean little—merely discomfort for a few days in breathing through the nostrils. To the majority, however, a cold in the head is really an exceedingly disagreeable experience, and, what is not sufficiently appreciated, it may hang on for weeks and develop into a chronic form, or open the way for one of the more serious throat or lung troubles.

Even so simple an inflammation as rhinitis is usually accompanied by slight feverishness and an increased pulse rate, and may occur dozens of times during the life of one having a susceptibility in that direction; whereas the so-called infectious fevers occur but once—in rare instances, twice—in a lifetime.

Now the infectious fevers are known to be microbic in origin, and the opinion seems to be gaining ground that a common cold is also an infection. One of the chief functions of the nose is to filter and free the air from germs as it passes through on its way to the lungs; and having done this for ages, it must have acquired an enormous capacity for resisting their action.



Metchnikoff has shown that such virulent bacilli as those of *plague* and *leprosy* are disposed of by the membrane in the nose, not through any bacterioidal property it possesses, but in a mechanical way. Furthermore, the relation between a draft and a cold, or a sore throat and a crowd, cannot be attributed to a specific microbe.

One person is known to be extremely sensitive to drafts, taking cold upon the slightest exposure to even the mildest currents of air; whereas another delights in such exposure, never experiencing the slightest bad effect from it. Another invariably suffers with sore throat after breathing the effluvia from several hundred people, as in a church or a theater. In fact, so exquisitely sensitive to these influences are some that they are forced to give up attendance upon any large gathering for this reason.

The body has remarkable powers of resistance, no two being exactly similar, but repeated exposures to the same conditions will in time weaken the resistance. Thus long exposure to heat, to cold, to fatigue, to anxiety, to mental strain, to bad air, to improper food supply—as to quantity or quality, or both—will so vitiate the body as to render it powerless to throw off an acute inflammation.

Changes in temperature and exposures to cold and wet are invariably mentioned by medical authorities as among the chief factors in establishing a "cold." We are all apt, when attacked with a cold in the head, a sore throat or cough or a pain in the abdomen, to exclaim, with a deprecatory wave of the hand: "I must have taken cold!" And while this is the case as far as it goes, it doesn't go far enough. We do not ask ourselves: "Why do I take cold so easily?" "Why have I this susceptibility?"

Does it ever occur to any of us that improper feeding may really be at the

bottom of most colds and allied conditions? If, when we are in comparatively good health—that is to say, when the blood is pure and circulating properly—we can expose ourselves to extremes of temperature—from 50 to 80 degrees below zero to 110 degrees F. above—without upsetting the body's equilibrium or causing the temperature, normal at 98.6 F., to deviate appreciably—if, we repeat, this remarkable heat equilibrium can be maintained with such amazing fixity in such extremes of temperature, why will it fluctuate below the normal and above the fever point every time we take a little cold?

In what condition must the body be to bring about this lowered vitality? It has been contended that the prevalence of catarrhal states among us is in part due to the overheating of our buildings. The air we breathe indoors is thus rendered so dry that our tissues become extremely susceptible to variations in temperature. There is an element of truth in this. We know that savage tribes do not suffer from colds. We know, too, that exposure to cold and taking cold do not mean the same thing, for when we are in a comparatively good condition, we do not take cold.

The resistance of healthy nasal mucous membrane to the most virulent disease germs, as shown by Metchnikoff, was alluded to above, and is especially significant now. This famous savant, so far in advance of his times, called the world's attention to the systemic dangers lurking in putrefactive changes in the intestinal tract. The relation between circulatory toxins and lowered resistance of the respiratory tract is plain. The epidemic of influenza or catarrhal fever through which the world has just passed was regarded by scientists as of intestinal origin. Some years ago an English physician pronounced influenzal and bronchial conditions due to wrong feeding. He

and many others advocate fewer meals, no breakfast. There is nothing new in this, for Hippocrates advised that if a man find himself not very well, he abstain from breakfast, especially in the summertime.

Of first importance, then, are preventive measures. To safeguard the system against colds, one must insure purity of blood by eating less food, by choosing only that of first quality, by keeping the intestinal tract clean and sweet. The circulation of pure blood through the highly vascular tissues of a nose and throat is further insured by breathing fresh air *constantly*. Perhaps at no time has the need for fresh circulating air been so forcibly *forced* upon the public as during the pandemic of influenza this winter.

Medical history shows that one of these epidemics is usually quickly followed by another. In time of epidemic, every cold should be regarded with suspicion, and the greatest precaution taken to abort the condition and to prevent the infection of others.

As soon as the first symptoms of a cold appear—such as “watering” of the eyes and a “stuffy” feeling in the nose, with some hoarseness—take a hot mustard foot bath. A good way to test the heat of the bath, in the absence of a water thermometer, the temperature of which may range from 95 to 104 degrees F., is to plunge the bare elbow into the bath. If it is well borne, it will not be too hot for tender skin. The feet should be immersed in the bath fully ten minutes; indeed, it is a good plan to take the bath in bed. This can very easily be done by means of a deep basin or foot tub slipped under the covers. The steam from the bath will also aid in opening the pores. While the foot bath is being taken, a hot drink should be made of water, lemon, and sugar, with the addition of a stick or two of slippery elm, cinnamon, or a dash of nutmeg. This drink should

be sipped as hot as it can be taken, and fully a pint consumed.

The body must be well, but lightly, covered throughout the night, so that perspiration will be freely induced. By morning the cold will be “broken” or aborted. A laxative should be taken upon an empty stomach a half hour before breakfast—milk of magnesia, citrate of magnesia, stewed prunes with senna, castor oil made in molasses candy, or any simple household laxative that will clean out the intestinal tract.

A bath followed by a cold shower—or, if that is not possible, by gradually lowering the temperature of the water until it is quite cool—followed by a brisk rubdown, will restore tone to the skin and close the pores, which would otherwise invite further trouble. Neglect of this precaution is the main reason why this simple and time-honored means of aborting a cold is so often unsuccessful.

If a bath is not convenient, briskly rubbing the entire body with a heavy, coarse towel immediately upon arising will stimulate the circulation and re-establish the bodily equilibrium.

For adults, a ten-grain Dover powder added to the above measures is very beneficial. It is also well to eat sparingly and masticate one's food with extra energy. The old saying, “Starve a fever and feed a cold,” is all nonsense, for it stands to reason that when the body is below par from any cause, however slight, it cannot handle the same amount of food as when in a good condition.

For a cold in the chest, vaseline and red pepper is a good home remedy and makes a capital counter-irritant. The chest should first be bathed in water as hot as can be borne to open the pores thoroughly. The pepper and vaseline should then be mixed and well rubbed in; after which the parts should be covered with a layer of flannel or cotton.

Another home remedy consists of

turpentine and linseed oil, for external use. If it is unwise to neglect a cold in the head, it is even more so to treat a cough cavalierly. Repeated coughs and colds break down one's vitality so that the recuperative forces of the system are tremendously lowered and the power of the body to resist the invasion of microbes that abound everywhere becomes so feeble that the tissues afford a suitable place for their growth and rapid multiplication. What follows? Pneumonia and, unfortunately, very often—tuberculosis. Take time by the forelock, then, and treat a cough the moment it appears. Here is a cough cure that can be made at home and that is a physician's formula as well: molasses, one pound; vinegar, one teaspoonful; gum arabic, two ounces; hoarhound, one ounce; licorice, one pound. Dissolve the licorice and gum arabic in a little water first. Boil the hoarhound thoroughly in a quart of water, and then strain with the molasses. Boil this with the other ingredients, adding the vinegar when the mixture is well cooled.

The dose is a teaspoonful every two or three hours. This soothes the mucous membrane of the respiratory tract and allays the congestion. Bathing the chest and back with cold salt water for ten or fifteen minutes—rubbing briskly afterward with a Turkish towel—and deep breathing exercises in the open air are also powerful aids in combating a cough and restoring tone to the whole system.

Hoarseness and sore throat may also be forerunners of more serious conditions. Persistent loss of the voice should be a warning, as it is usually one of the first symptoms of tuberculosis of the larynx. Inhalations of oil of eucalyptus and oil of turpentine in the form of a vapor are very beneficial. About a tablespoonful of each is added to a pint of water, which is placed in a croup kettle with a long spout. The steam or

vapor, as it escapes, is then breathed into the throat. Repeat every few hours. This is also excellent treatment for croupy conditions.

A well-known home remedy for hoarseness consists of the beaten white of an egg, the juice of a lemon, and enough powdered sugar to sweeten. The lemon juice cuts the phlegm, the egg albumen soothes the irritated membrane, and the sugar is healing. In the South, the pure juice of pineapple is used in throat conditions of a very serious character, including diphtheria, and proves remarkably efficacious. Another home remedy consists of two tablespoonfuls of sweet oil mixed with two teaspoonfuls of sugar; a little is taken every half hour. It loosens the phlegm and facilitates its removal.

As has been said, the epidemic of influenza or catarrhal fever through which the world has just passed was regarded by scientists as of intestinal origin. Now influenza, grippe, or epidemic catarrhal fever is an exceedingly treacherous disease, being especially dangerous to those susceptible to "colds."

While the symptoms of influenza are always catarrhal, and the so-called thoracic type is the commonest, the disease is by no means limited to this class of cases. In some instances, it affects the nervous system more decidedly, causing profound prostration; again, the gastro-intestinal system may feel the affection most, so that violent purging and vomiting, intense abdominal pain, catarrhal jaundice, and other symptoms referable to the abdominal organs may play the leading rôle in an attack. Again, the symptoms in a given case may be very mild, simulating an ordinary cold in the head, with a slight bronchial involvement.

Can anything be done to prevent the disease? No, because the strongest and most robust are not immune, and also because experience has proven that the

drugs usually employed for their preventive effect—quinine and salicin—are without value. We can only keep the system in as healthy a state as possible by avoiding those things that we know will favor the disease. Among them are alcohol, and, as stated above, over-eating, neglect of the intestinal tract—not only should constipation be overcome, but even the slightest costiveness should be avoided—anything that is a tax upon the nervous system, such as loss of sleep, *habitual* indulgence in pleasures—dancing, for instance—or anything the nature of which is a drain upon the nerves and the vital forces.

Plenty of exercise in the fresh air and a brisk, cold salt-water rubdown with coarse mitts every day will strengthen the system to resist the severity of an attack.

Likewise, by protecting little children, the aged, infirm, and debilitated, with proper clothing and from exposure to inclement weather, we can succeed in lessening the number of cases: The management of influenzal patients demands that, even when mildly attacked, they should be put to bed and made to rest until convalescence is well advanced. Old people must have supporting treatment, and coal-tar products are to be avoided generally, as they induce heart failure.

Spring is the season for colds, and March the month above all others for pneumonia. The obese, the plethoric, are more susceptible to pneumonic conditions than those of more slender habit, so health and beauty go hand in hand. A guarded diet, exercise in the open, cleanliness of the mucous tracts, will so strengthen the system that disease germs lose their power. While women are more careless in exposing themselves to the elements, through the scantiness of their raiment and so on, fashion favors them in many respects. The veil has been condemned because of its effect upon the eyes, but is now

advocated, as it acts like a gauze mask, through which the air is warmed and filtered of germs and organic matter. But—veils must be cleansed every few days; otherwise they are a menace instead of a preventive measure.

The light clothing worn indoors by women, with exposure of the throat to the elements—protective wraps being added for out-of-doors—renders them less susceptible to colds of a catarrhal nature, because the tissues become injured to changes of temperature.

Men wear heavy suits of underwear, besides heavy outer clothing indoors. Their skin is more active in consequence, but when a sudden chilling of the body occurs, they are more apt to contract pneumonia.

It is an established scientific fact that women possess greater power of endurance and of resistance than men. There are many reasons for this, one of which is unquestionably the gradations in dress observed by women—light, airy clothing indoors, outer garments in accordance with the weather, and furs to protect the body from chilling drafts, no matter what the season and despite mere man's ridicule! He might do well to emulate his sister in some things that experience has proven worthy, just as she compliments his good sense in so many other respects.

Now what can be done to render the facial appearance less unattractive during a heavy cold? The eyes should not be used except for necessary work. An eye bath consisting of a soothing camphorated wash can be employed every few hours to combat conjunctival irritation. A nasal spray of menthol, ten grains to a few drams of albolene, makes breathing easier. But for the intense swelling that often completely excludes the nasal chambers, nothing is so efficacious as a solution of adrenalin inserted upon pledgets of cotton.

Painful excoriation of the lips and nostrils may be treated with camphor-

ated ice or a lotion consisting of spirits of camphor, one-half dram; compound tincture of benzoin, two drams; listerine, ten ounces; glycerite of hydrastis, enough to make four drams. This lo-

tion, by the way, is also, admirable for chapped hands, face, and lips, and makes an excellent preparation with which to combat the effect of the high winds so prevalent at this season.

## WHAT READERS ASK

AMIE. V. D.—Brittle nails, when not caused by carelessness and coarse work, are often due to a lack of oils in the system. Include olive oil in your daily diet and rub some into the nails every day. I will gladly send you data on beautifying the hands and nails, if you will send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for a personal reply.

RUDOLPHUS.—The trouble might be flat-foot, which very frequently simulates rheumatism. Take an impression of your bare feet on blackened paper. Appropriate footwear is all that is needed for an incipient case. The crippling of feet with corns, bunions, and callosities may bring about a condition such as you describe. I will gladly send treatment for these painful excrescences if you wish.

SCHOOLBOY.—I earnestly hope you are serious as to your inquiry regarding smoking. It is highly injurious at your age, because it depresses the circulation, causing palpitation of the heart. Smoking, especially cigarette smoking, gives rise to an inflammation of the upper air passages of the eyes. It produces mental laziness, with inability to sustain mental effort. I hope all boys who read this will no longer think it "manly" to smoke.

LILY DELL.—"May Dew Milk" contains:  
 Red-rose leaves.....2 ounces  
 Borax .....½ ounce  
 Glycerin .....1 ounce  
 Tincture of benzoin .....1 ounce  
 Rose water .....1½ pints

Mix.

JOHN DOE.—I am more than delighted to hear from male readers, as it indicates the popularity of this department. It seems more than likely that some other skin affection has been mistaken for "barber's itch." With our splendid compulsory methods of sanitation, barber's itch is rapidly disappearing. This is really a form of ringworm, and you must bear the fact in mind that

whatever particular affection you have is also probably highly contagious, so guard against communicating it to others. The following is a good application for barber's itch:

Boric acid .....1 dram  
 Sulphuric ether .....10 drams  
 Alcohol enough to make .....5 ounces

Mop on frequently. If you desire an ointment of resorcin, I will gladly send a formula. Resorcin is the remedy par excellence for contagious skin affections of this description.

MARTA X.—You will never be able to reduce your girth by diet alone, if the abdominal muscles are flaccid, as I think they probably are. The integrity of the abdominal wall is needful for several very important purposes, one of which is to keep the contents of the abdomen *in situ*. It stands to reason that soft or pendulous fatty tissue here permits sagging of the great organs, with manifold symptoms of ill health, notably neurasthenic troubles. Exercise that strengthens the muscles will reduce superabundant flesh. One of the best exercises for this purpose was described in a recent article—November SMITH'S—entitled "Intestinal Sluggishness." You complain of constipation—naturally, since tense abdominal walls assist in the propulsion of intestinal contents. You should wear an abdominal support when actively engaged on your feet. Direction for making a simple garment of this sort will be mailed you on personal application.

JUDY F.—The following ointment may prove helpful for chapped hands:

Tannic acid .....8 grains  
 Glycerin .....5 drams  
 Rose water .....6 ounces  
 Use as often as desired.

Directions for beautifying the hands must be mailed to you. Send self-directed, stamped envelope.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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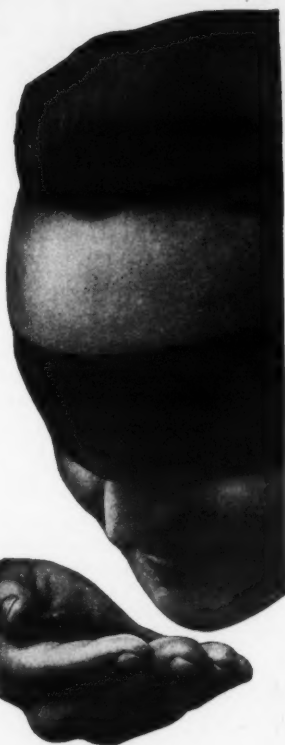
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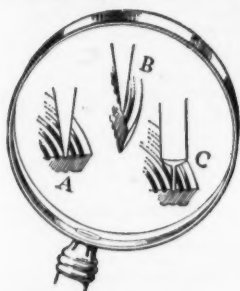
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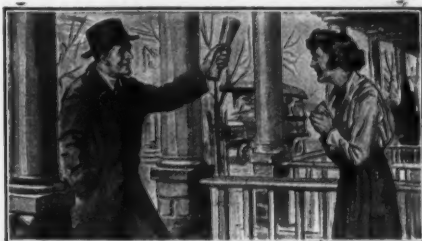
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## Free Trial Offer

You can cut your own hair just as easy as brushing your hair, with the Cowan Master Barber Hair Cutter. Marvellous new invention does away with tiresome waits in the barber shop. Gives you a perfect hair cut right in your own home. Saves your time and patience, as well as the cost of hair cuts. We'll take all the risk. Our free trial offer will show you beyond the shadow of a doubt that you can cut your own hair as well as any barber can cut it. A finished hair cut just as you want it, in fifteen minutes. Any time, any place—it's always ready!

## COWAN Master Barber HAIR CUTTER

is scientifically correct. Made so anyone can use it properly and get a good hair cut on the first trial. For trimming around ears, a simple adjustment gives the proper angle. Hair is evenly tapered. Will not shave nor split hairs. Each hair cut off squarely. Adjustable for use as a safety razor. Comes packed in an attractive and convenient leatherette-covered metal case. Blades of finest Swedish steel, especially tempered and ground. The Cowan Hair Cutter is made from the best of materials by high-class workmen. Will last a life-time and will pay for itself many times over.

### 5000 in Use

Over five thousand satisfied users. But the real proof for you is to get a Cowan Master Barber Hair Cutter on our trial offer and prove it to yourself.

**WHY WAIT?** You'll be cutting your hair in a year or two anyway—everybody will—it'll be the accepted thing. The Cowan is here to stay—get one and save money, time and patience.

### FREE—Send No Money

Just send your name and address today. You may be doubtful, but a trial of the Cowan will convince you. Send no money. Take no risk—assume no obligation. Prove the "Cowan" in your own home right now. Just accept today our free trial offer. A Postcard will do.

**COWAN HAIR CUTTER CO.**  
Kansas City, Missouri  
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This old family standby—pure, pleasant, simple and efficacious—has soothed inflamed and irritated throats, and relieved coughs, for more than half a century. 30 cents a bottle—at your druggist's.

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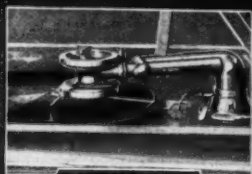
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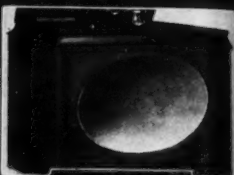
## Method of Reproduction



*The Ultona*



*The Brunswick*



*The Amplifier*

## Two New Ideas Which Won Millions of Friends

**W**HEN the now famous Brunswick was announced, most people believed that the utmost had already been attained in the phonographic art.

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### Two Famous Ideas

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